

Photoshop[®] creative

The magazine for
Adobe[®] Photoshop[®]
inspiration and advice

Photo editing special!

Create your ideal photo

20 pages of advice for editing photos to perfection

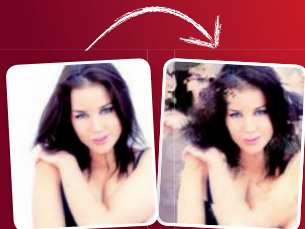
Tool tips

Get started with lighting

Learn the basic tools for adding dynamic light effects to images

Textured brushes

Mimic real media with patterns and styles



Filter artworks

The dark art of displacement maps

54
pages
of creative
tutorials



Soft focus



Reduce noise



Sharpen edges



Light tricks



Lens effects

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ISSUE 72

LUXURY FOR ALL



Glamorous Model © Dmitry Fisher
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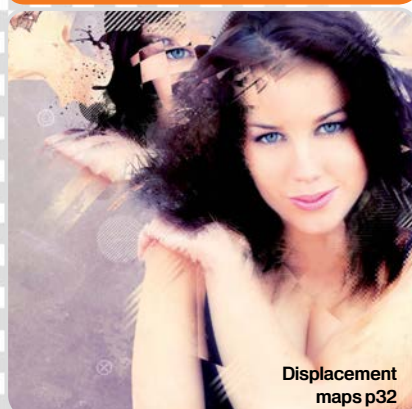
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A glimpse
of what's in
store this
issue...



Retouch photos
with filters p22



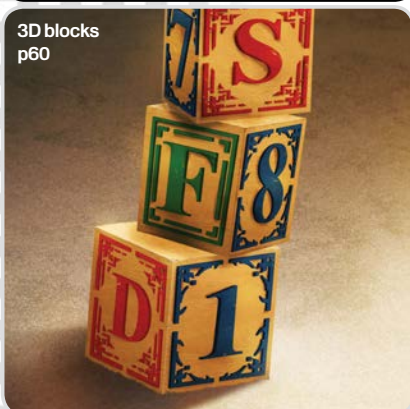
Displacement
maps p32

Mission Statement

Here at Photoshop Creative, we promise to always give you the best selection of resources to help improve your Photoshop skills. Whether it's in-depth guides to tools and techniques, or showing how to create a work of digital art, we'll make sure the information you get is accurate and informative. We want you to get the optimum Photoshop experience, and have as much fun using the program as we do putting the magazine together.



Get started with
lighting p46



3D blocks
p60



Filters are sometimes considered the preserve of the beginner – a simple way of applying effects that a user eventually grows out of as they come to understand Photoshop and use other methods of creativity. And I

have to admit, to a certain extent this is true. Filters are a wonderful way for a fledgling Photoshop user to create something with very little effort. But I feel like sometimes they can be dismissed as nothing more than this when, in fact, they can be extremely useful to even the most advanced Photoshop fan.

Our feature on page 22 aims to give you an example of this. We tasked professional photographer Matt Henry with picking out the best filters for retouching and editing photos. There is a lot that can be done by thinking creatively, and hopefully you will see how the Filter menu can be viewed as a powerful retouching arsenal. Keeping in the filter field, our tutorial on page 32 looks at one of the most complex filters – the Displace filter. Discover how this can be used to break apart an image to great effect.

Actions are an incredibly useful part of Photoshop, especially if you find yourself making the same edits time and again. Our Big Technique on page 52 takes a look at these helpful beasts, revealing how to use them as well as how to create your own. Another brilliant tool for speeding up repetitive tasks is the Batch command, and you can find out all about it on page 64.

If you are surrounded by the signs of spring, you'll enjoy our tutorial on page 38, where we give a blossom tree photo an oil painting transformation. Have fun!

Jo Cole Editor in Chief

jo.cole@imagine-publishing.co.uk

Next issue of Photoshop Creative on sale 7 April

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an amazing deal!
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Retouch photos with filters

Don't dismiss filters, use them as part of your retouching regime



Creative hub

Photoshop news

Get the skinny on the best services and resources for Photoshop users, as well as discovering new artists



Advice centre

Tips, tricks and solutions

We smash your Photoshop and Photoshop Elements problems and reveal Photoshop tools in depth



Creative reviews

Make an informed choice

Don't waste your money – we test the products that claim to help you and discover which ones are the best



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How to get the most out of this powerful filter

Visit the
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online shop at
www.imagineshop.co.uk
for back issues,
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60 3D Transform

Create a wooden block effect completely in Photoshop



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On the CD

Amazing free resources



The complete list of what's on this issue's disc – video tutorials, brushes and more

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Readers' Challenge

Check out the entries



See the imaginative entries to past challenges and take part yourself by turning to page 98



tutorials



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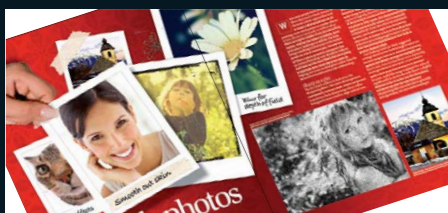
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Photoshop Express

The mobile app for quick edits



contributors our panel of experts



MATT HENRY

www.matthenryphoto.com



Matt flies the flag for filters and reveals how they can be used to edit and retouch your photos to perfection. Read all his ingenious tips on page 22.



MARK MAYERS

www.markmayers.co.uk



The Displace filter can be a bit of a slippery customer, but Mark is here to show you how it works. Turn to page 32 to be initiated and learn to give photos a quirky edge.



TIM SHELBOURNE

www.timshelbourne.net



Digital art can sometimes look a little flat, but don't get discouraged – Tim has a clever way of giving your brushes the look of thick oil paint. See how on page 38.



KIRK NELSON

www.photoshopcreative.co.uk/user/kirk3d



Bubbles are every kid's favourite, and Kirk shows how you can add some digital magic to photos over on page 56 by creating beautiful bubble text.



DAVID COUSENS

www.coolsurface.com



We like making something out of nothing, and that's exactly what David does on page 60. He creates some 3D wooden blocks that would look great on a scrapbook design.



DUNCAN EVANS

www.duncanevans.co.uk



Duncan reveals the wonders of the Batch command on page 64, in addition to showing a nifty way of making a traditional film strip effect on page 66.



ZOE MUTTER

Making an image look like it is coming out of a frame is a great technique for giving your photographs that extra something special. Follow Zoe's steps to see exactly how it is done on page 68.



SIMON RUDD

www.simonrudd.info



A misty landscape can make for a great photo, but don't worry if you never see the event for real – you can fake it in Photoshop. Simon shows how on page 74.

Photoshop creative

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Technology TV Presenter



Creative hub

The latest news from the Photoshop community

TOP STORY: GRAPHICS TABLETS

Replace your mouse for a more responsive painting tool

Painting made natural

Graphics tablets re-create the feel of using a real pencil, pen, or paintbrush, enabling pressure sensitive painting for realistic brushstrokes. With the latest releases from companies Hanvon and Genius, there has never been a better time to look for an upgrade and replace your mouse with a stylus.

In a variety of sizes and prices, Hanvon (www.hanvon.com) has unveiled a new range of tablets. The series starts with the company's entry-level tablet, the Rollick, at £59.99. The tablet has a

“With such variety, Hanvon is certainly providing a tempting alternative to Wacom”

pressure level of 1,024 and a resolution of 4,000dpi for accurately painting and drawing with. The new series goes all the way up to the SenTIP 1201 WD, which allows you to ‘paint’ directly in the screen. It comes in at £799.99, with a pressure level of 2,048 and a high tablet resolution of 5,080dpi. Other models from Hanvon include the



Hanvon's SenTIP 1201 WD can be purchased from www.colourconfidence.com

ArtMaster III, the GraphicPal and the company's Wireless Tablet; all filling in the gaps to suit various budgets. Each tablet comes with its own style and

in a different size, and with such variety, Hanvon is certainly providing a tempting alternative to market leaders Wacom.

The new MousePen M508W by Genius (www.geniusnet.co.uk) comes in at £129.98. The tablet has a 5 x 8 inch working area that has a pressure level of 1,024. It can work completely wirelessly with its mouse and pen combination.

Offering numerous shortcut keys and buttons on the supplied stylus, the tablet helps cut down the time spent using your keyboard to perform those simple commands, such as Undo

and Save. It's also compact and light enough to slip into a bag and take with you for working out of the office.



The wireless MousePen M508W by Genius has a ten-metre working range

Nomad Brush

The stylus revamped

The digital paintbrush invented for the iPad

An innovation for painting on the iPad has been unleashed into the hands of digital artists. The Nomad Brush reimagines the customary, pen-like stylus with sensitive digital bristles, closely resembling a traditional paintbrush.

A normal stylus pen usually makes use of a solid tip for painting with, but the Nomad Brush is the only one of its kind. The bristles are strands of flexible, conductive fibre and replicate the feel of a real brush. They can react to the surface of the iPad and give you a genuine brushed look.

We can only wonder when the announcement will be made for a similar stylus for graphics tablets. Will Wacom catch on, or maybe Genius? Whoever takes the idea (and someone will), these are promising times for digital painters who enjoy using the iPad as a canvas.

The Nomad Brush is available for \$24 from www.nomadbrush.com, where you can also see a video of it in action and examples of what kind of effects the brush can give on the iPad.



It looks like a real brush, and paints like one too

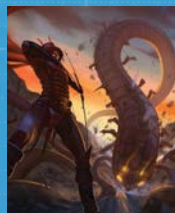
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ALEX BROECKEL
www.alexbroeckel.com



Steampunk artwork to a very high standard, this action-packed scene by Alex Broeckel has endless detail, and plenty of steam too.



LORENZ HIDEYOSHI RUWWE
http://hideyoshi.deviantart.com

Fighting off possessed machinery is the lot of Lorenz Hideyoshi Ruwwe's steampunk character. Check out his online gallery for more excellent artwork.



JEAN CHRISTOPHE LARGILLIER
http://largill.cgsociety.org/gallery

A realistically painted steampunk portrait of a man with mechanical goggles, a pistol and a very serious expression.

Bookazine

Illustrate with Photoshop Vol. 1

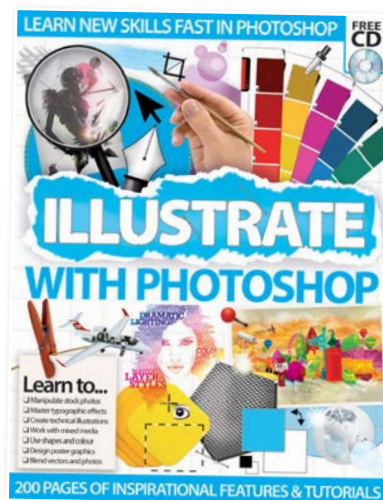
New title available for mastering Photoshop skills

Get your fill of Photoshop techniques and inspiration with this bookazine, the latest title from Imagine Publishing, *Illustrate with Photoshop Volume 1*. Its 200 plus pages divide illustration into three, easy-to-follow sections: graphics, photo illustration and typography,

“There are tutorials for mastering many sub-genres such as retro art and vector graphics”

and guide you through the important tools and adjustments that Photoshop can offer the illustrator within these fields.

Skills covered in the new title include working with stock images for those tricky



Illustrate with Photoshop Vol. 1 teaches essential skills for working in PS

photomanipulations, understanding graphical art and tips for a great composition. There are also tutorials for mastering many sub-genres such as retro art, mixed media, vector and poster graphics to enjoy. The title is supplied with a bundle of resources to complement its tutorials, and goodies include 50 stock images, mixed-media brushes, textures, gradients and patterns.

Illustrate with Photoshop Vol. 1 costs £14.99 and can be purchased now from the publisher's online store www.imagineshop.co.uk.



Find free tutorials, brushes, images and more at Photoshopdaily.co.uk



Arrow custom shapes

These custom shapes can be used to stamp an arrow onto images to point to certain subject.



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Gunslinger desktop

A comical character from the wild West to use as your desktop – ready to download right away.



Graphical paper 5

Bring an interesting mix of colour and shape to your project with these great papers and perhaps a blend mode.

TOP 5

Five excellent online book-making companies



05

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04

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01

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BEST OF THE REST...



Raggedy texture

A texture file that replicates crumpled paper, revealing wonderful fibres and bumps of real paper.



Autumn gradients

It's never the wrong time of year to import an autumnal colour scheme into images, and these gradients will do just that.



Rivers and canal stock images

Bring the beauty of British canals and rivers into your artwork with these stock images.

Top rated
gallery

Check out five of the 'Top Rated Galleries' from photoshopcreative.co.uk



EITHNE O'HANLON

Gallery: www.photoshopcreative.co.uk/user/Ni_Anluain

Creating fantasy characters is Eithne O'Hanlon's forte. Each one has a dark and sinister demeanour, masterfully crafted in Photoshop.



IVAN KASH

Gallery: www.photoshopcreative.co.uk/user/Kashivan

From zombies to beautiful portraits painted and sketched in Photoshop, Ivan Kash's gallery is an excellent example of what can be done in the program.

The BIG? Question

We ask Barbara Brundage, "what are the main differences between PS Elements 9 and CS5?"

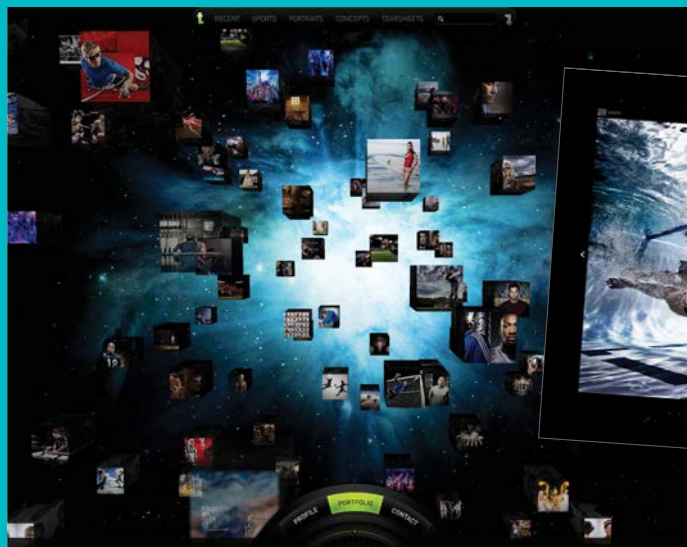


"The obvious answer is price. Elements 9 is really inexpensive, sometimes even free with a graphics tablet, for example.

Elements 9 is great for multimedia, basic drawing and painting and, if you don't need to create vectors, you can do a lot with it if you make use of one of the add-on tool sets available. You can do many of the tutorials in **Photoshop Creative**, for example, and use the brushes and such from the CD. You won't be able to use quite everything, though. Actions, for instance, won't work.

Also, there's a path that makes upgrading from Elements 9 to CS5 about the same price, or even a bit less, as CS5 by itself. The biggest drawback is that there's no easy way to do individual channel adjustments in a Curves layer. You don't have everything you can do in CS5, but for many people it's still plenty."

Barbara Brundage is the author of Photoshop Elements 9: The Missing Manual <http://oreilly.com>. Image by Jodi Frye



Prolific digital artist Tim Tadder shows what's possible in PS

Website wonder

WWW.TIMTADDER.COM

This is the home of photographer and Photoshop expert Tim Tadder. Working from his studio in California, Tim produces images covering many walks of life. Ranging from sports and famous faces to retouched work for advertising and live music, there's a quality that makes you feel like you're caught in the action.

The website is navigated through a nebula of floating cubes on a cosmic background. Each cube, when clicked, brings up an awesome

3D rotational box with a different image on each face, making just browsing fun. Cubes are then spun around or closed down to go back to the homepage. It's the individuality of each subject photographed that makes Tim's style unique, along with being in the right place for that important photographic moment. If his Photoshop work fails to impress (which is highly unlikely!) then his website as a whole will certainly capture your imagination.

Competition Slug it out online for the PS title

Test your skills

There are plenty of opportunities online to test your skills with Photoshop and earn acclaim as a competing digital artist.

Worth1000.com is one such web-based competition that welcomes artists of any skill level. Submissions are pitched against other members of the site under a chosen theme or set

task, and winning artwork receives credit bonuses, trophies and more.

Photoshopcontest.com is another great portal for testing your creativity with many topics, and prizes that come in the form of cold, hard cash.

If you've got what it takes to take on the web, then these are great places to get your work out there.



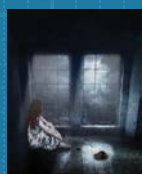
Online competitions are a great way of testing your skills

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FRANCIS GERALDS

Gallery: www.photoshopcreative.co.uk/user/frankula
Mysterious, imaginative and bizarre sums up Francis Gerald's artwork. His experimental style has resulted in a popular gallery.



THIRSHA REDFERN

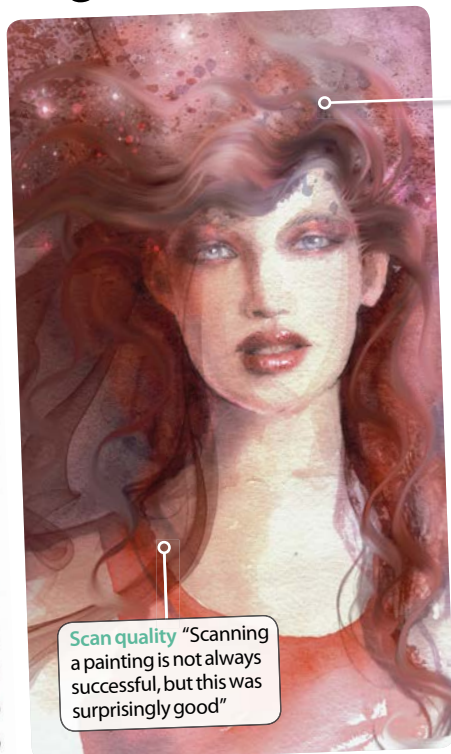
Gallery: www.photoshopcreative.co.uk/user/Thirsha
Thirsha Redfern's solitary characters are composed to powerful effect. Eerie dungeons and dramatic landscapes collide in excellent harmony.



MIKE LIM

Gallery: www.photoshopcreative.co.uk/user/Daarken
Mike Lim paints fantasy characters of different mythical races. Conceptual and atmospheric, each one is frighteningly marvellous.

Digital sketchbook



Natural look Patricia makes good use of the Natural brushes along with the Smudge tool to create realistic blends

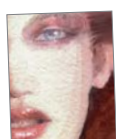
Patricia Brennan has made a name for herself through online communities, selling handcrafted, commissioned portraits and submitting her work to galleries. Currently working with photographer Rebecca Parker, Patricia produces costumes and props for photo shoots in return for high-quality stock art.

"There is no great concept behind this image *Seeing Red*. Inspiration came from a glossy magazine. I often just splash the paint and add some salt to make textures for my digital work," explains Patricia about her Sketchbook image.

Patricia enjoys traditional media just as much as digital art, and tells us, "I adore bold watercolours and often sit and paint something just for fun. I rarely draw anything first, just a suggestion of lines if I do."

To see more of Patricia's work, head to her gallery at www.moonmomma.co.uk.

Scan quality "Scanning a painting is not always successful, but this was surprisingly good"



Step 1 I painted directly onto damp paper allowing colours to blend. Highlights are scratched out with a scalpel when dry.



Step 2 After scanning and importing into Photoshop, I used the Smudge tool to pull out strands of hair.



Step 3 I tweaked the levels to bring up the reds slightly. Finally I sharpened it with a filter.

twitter

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@PshopCreative Is there a tool, feature in Photoshop, or even style of art, that you'd like to know more about?



sergiomorana@PshopCreative Using green screen; doing shadows on background when using green screen. Thanks :-)



suefalstaff@PshopCreative Understanding the difference between a path and a vector - I always get confused. More info would be marvellous. Thank you!



Wardys@PshopCreative I bought Photoshop CS5 6 months ago and not used Photoshop before. You have provided a vast amount of info but I need a book.



justin_chi@PshopCreative Combined multiple images & textures & graphic into one striking image.

App update

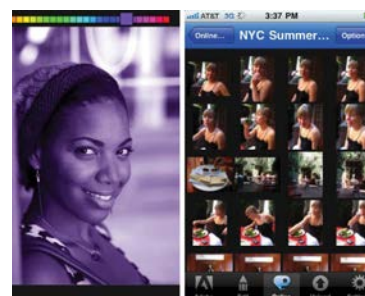
Adobe's latest Express

Edit on the move with Photoshop Express 1.5

If taking your own stock images on a mobile device is a big part of your workflow, then the latest release of Photoshop Express 1.5 is worth getting hold of. Adobe has upgraded the app for Retina displays for the latest iOS devices, meaning playback quality is beautifully crisp. Captured photos can be edited in the app for cropping, applying effects and managing

multiple images taken with the Express's new continuous shoot mode. Using the app's numerous filters, tools, borders and photo effects you could give a sketched effect, turn images to black and white art or apply a softer edge.

To access the latest version of Express, head to the iTunes store or <http://mobile.photoshop.com> to download for free, you can also check out our review on page 89.



Make Photoshop Express 1.5 your app of choice for mobile editing

Make a date



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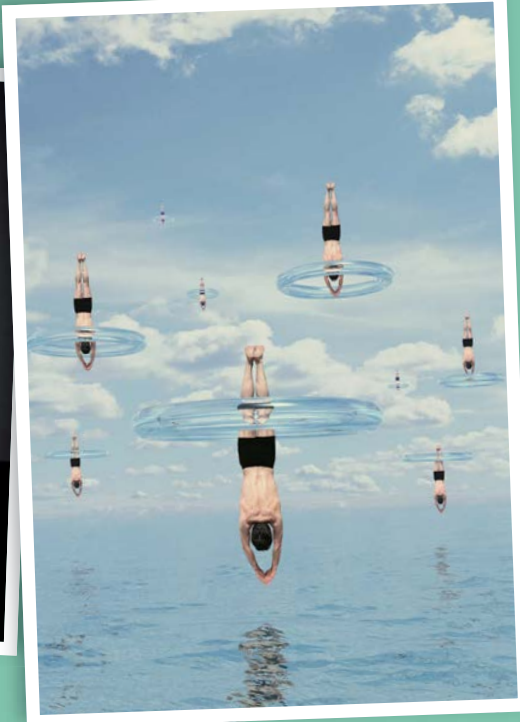


Spectrum Textures founder Tim Bird tells us about the challenges he faces as a retouch pro and reveals to us how Photoshop's 'backbone' feature has it all



The story behind...

Tim Bird



Dive Not a huge amount of Photoshop used here, but an accurate cut-out was needed for the diver in order for him to be combined with some 3D software



Tim Bird is a retouch artist with a passion for textures who has launched his own dedicated texture resource website, Spectrum Textures (www.spectrumtextures.com). Tim tells us about his current assignment for the launch of a new Formula One car, and how he's compiling a variety of images for posters, with the prospect of selling. Tim's Photoshop experience dates back to version 2, where things were a little different. Having experience of Photoshop at this early stage has helped him cope with today's digital possibilities, as he explains.

Tell us about what you're currently working on, and who for?

I've just retouched the photos for the Marussia Virgin Racing's F1 car launch, a great job considering I'm an F1 fan. In my own time I'm putting together a

selection of images to submit to various poster companies. I'm hoping to sell them globally through networks of websites and shops. I'm really enjoying it, as there are no clients or deadlines! It's actually been a real breath of fresh air because above all it's fun to do. I'd forgotten what it was like to create stuff without being rushed. If they don't like the pictures then I'm not too fussed.

How far do you and Photoshop go back, and what were you using it for?

I started using version 2 early on for commercial purposes. I was one of the few who actually read the manual and was quickly entrusted with big jobs. Some of my first projects were covers for mail order brochures. I remember phoning a friend to ask how to use the Pen tool! I totally bluffed my way through those earlier jobs. The computers were more expensive in the early Nineties, so I sold my car and bought a Mac. Without question, reading the manual and having a machine at home when Photoshop was in its infancy was beneficial to me.

What are the challenges of standing out as a professional retoucher?

Quite often you turn up for a booking and you really don't know what you are in for. It can be mentally, technically and creatively challenging. You are being paid as an expert so the pressure is on

to deliver. Sometimes you are trying to imagine what the designer or creative director wants and you don't always get it right first time. Throw into the equation a tight deadline and a client who keeps making changes, and things can get tricky. Thankfully my experience helps and I can hit the ground running and get working with the creatives. Sadly I don't have much control over the client!

Which Photoshop tools help you out the most in your day-to-day life?

I consider the Layers palette to be the most important part of the software. The 'backbone' if you like. It's all there – layers, masks, adjustments, text, effects. A great visual guide as to what is going on. You can work on some really complex stuff with relative ease, create amazing effects using the layer modes, place type and blend many elements to give a smooth, simple montage. The tools I use most are the Pen, Brush, Healing and Clone tools. A lot of cleaning up and masking is part of retouching so these tools are essential.

Where do you go for stock images?

Whenever possible I use companies like Getty Images and Corbis Images because of the quality of the images. A lot of companies I work for have credits with their chosen sites. Popular ones are iStockphoto, Shutterstock, Image Source and Jupiter Images. I

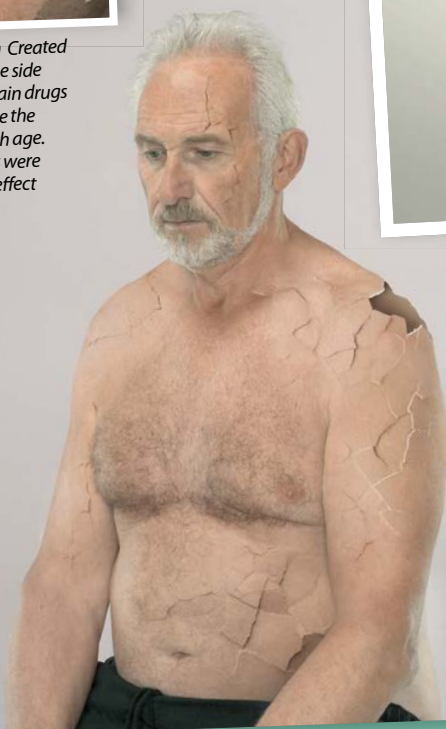
3 Faces A friend took these shots and I blended them in a style reminiscent of a Queen album cover



WEB | TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT TIM'S WORK GO TO WWW.TIMBIRD.CO.UK AND WWW.SPECTRUMTEXTURES.COM



Cracked Man Created to illustrate the side effects of certain drugs that can make the skin crack with age. Cracked eggs were used for this effect



E-Type Jaguar This beautiful car was shot outdoors and a lot of time was spent cleaning it up



Women in Flowers 48-sheet poster for Lakeside. Could read 'Feel-good Photoshopping'

like researching pictures for projects. The internet, Google image search and Flickr are other good places to look, with many being made freely available by the photographer. Naturally, though, I always use Spectrum Textures for my backgrounds and textures!

Tell us about Spectrum Textures and why you decided to launch your own image resource site?

Before the internet took off, a lot of source materials for retouchers came from CDs from companies like PhotoDisc and Digital Vision. I used these images a lot and was often thinking to myself, "I could do that". Move things forward a few years and I got myself some decent digital camera gear, a very good scanner and some fast hardware and software. It took a couple of years to get a good volume of images together and many hours of preparation, but I'm pleased with how it's going and I have many more free images in the pipeline. Creatives can benefit from the

fact that the images are provided by a retoucher who thinks like they do. Have a look, let me know what you think and please spread the word!

What would you like to see in Photoshop CS6?

First and foremost I think that Adobe needs to work on the general stability of the software and eliminate the bugs that seem to have crept in with recent versions. I've worked at many different companies so I know it isn't isolated to a particular computer. I really hope Adobe addresses this. I would also love to see the interface given a complete overhaul. It stems from software that's now over 20 years old and, for me, it shows. When you start opening palettes and working on your image, you soon find stuff all over the place. Also, if you open a palette that you don't use much you may find it opens other palettes that are attached to it. I sold Lightroom and purchased Aperture because of the interface. I hope Adobe is reading this!

Tim's top retouching tips and tricks

Constant light It's not always possible but working in the dark will help with colour sensitive work. Your light will be consistent and won't be affected by different daylight conditions or light bulbs that fill your room with orange light. I find it easier to see what's going on and eliminate any potential mistakes.

Calibrate your screen I use a device by Pantone, which sits in front and takes colour readings and then readjusts the monitor. They're not too expensive and quite easy to use. Working in low light on a calibrated monitor takes out a lot of the guesswork.

Know your keyboard shortcuts Go into Preferences and uncheck Use Shift Key for Tool Switch. Hit the keyboard for the tool you want. A good example of its usefulness is if you want to enter Quick Mask mode using the brush with default colours, all you need to do is hit Q, B and D.

Keep your layers organised If your images start to rack up the layers then it's easy to get a bit lost, and you'll soon find yourself scrolling up and down and clicking on and off. Name your folders using capitals, then if you Ctrl/right-click with the Move tool (V) on your canvas you'll find it easier to locate your required layer.

Give obvious file names It's easy to call a file 'master layered.psd' but that could prove difficult to find in ten years! Name it something like 'green car.psd' instead. Try to avoid TIFF for layered files. Stick to PSDs for layered and TIFF for flattened files to eliminate confusion and make life easier.



Reader's profile

Russian-born artist and Photoshop Creative reader Svetlana Sewell tells us about herself, her favourite Photoshop tools and unveils the processes behind her image, *Dolphins*



Make yourself known!

If you'd like to be featured here, send us an email to pcr@imagine-publishing.co.uk with a few lines about who you are and what sort of Photoshop work you do.

Below: 104 I took this photograph of a passing tram in Russia last summer. It was processed as an HDR in Photomatrix Pro 3, and I then used the Pen tool to extract it from the background. The journey for the people inside the tram now begins, carrying the past into the future



Right: Katherine This is a portrait of my cousin I took using natural light coming through a window. Her dreamy eyes and gorgeous young looks gave me the inspiration to create this background effect full of fantasy

Far right: Promises I took this portrait of my 16-year-old on his way to his school prom. All of the images – including the lightning – are from my own collection, and I used brushes for the trees and birds

Do you have a favourite tool or technique in Photoshop?

One of my favourite tools is the vector-based Pen tool, because it allows an image to be extracted from its background and then gives you the freedom of choice as to where its new home should be. This makes it perfect for photomanipulation and work with lots of different images.

What's your favourite image that you have created so far?

Recently I have discovered the creative fun of photomanipulation and I would say that my favourite creation to date is Promises. It's made from a blend of original photographs taken by myself, and then the different elements of the images have been extracted with the Pen tool and placed into the main background to create a surreal and dark fantasy.

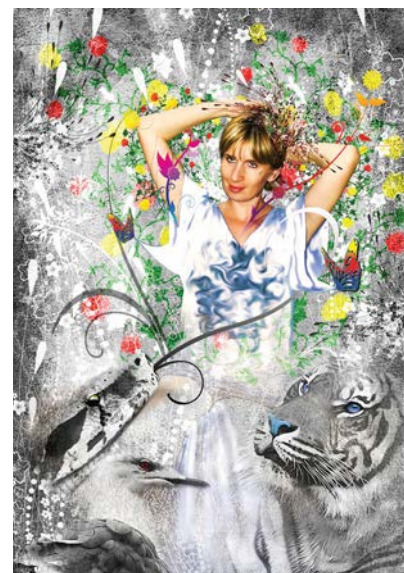
Where do you get your inspiration from?

My inspiration comes from many places. My love of photography and watching Hollywood CGI movies play a big part, as does looking at the works of other artists that I admire online as well as those featured in Photoshop Creative and Advanced Photoshop.

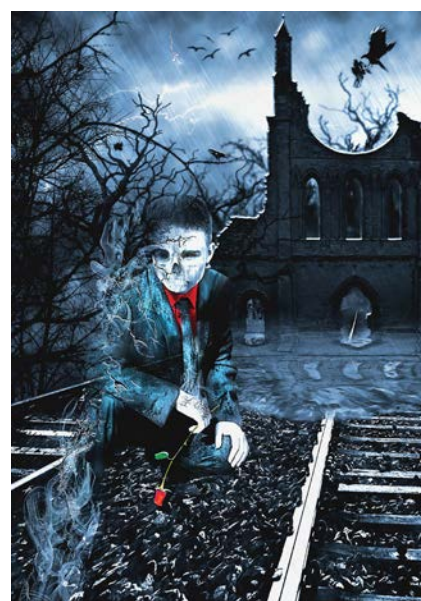


Have you changed the way you use Photoshop over the years?

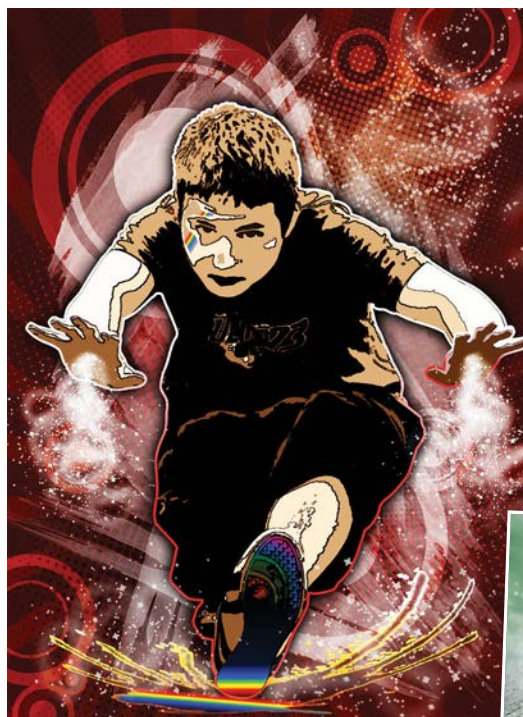
My use of Photoshop is constantly evolving. As I learn new techniques, I discover new ways of incorporating images into my work. I now have a graphics tablet and am discovering even more new ideas.



Above: Natasha My lovely and bubbly sister. She's a dreamer and I have created a fantasy world for her surrounded with animals from my own stock, with lots of flourish brushes supplied by Photoshop Creative



CHECK OUT MORE OF SVETLANA'S WORK HERE: WWW.PHOTOSHOPBAY.COM



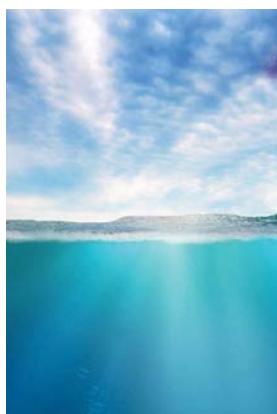
Far left: Umbrella Man This work was inspired when myself and a friend went for a night-time shoot in a town. The mysterious figure and the rain were added later in Photoshop

Left: Vector Boy A shot of my son. While he was climbing up a hill he struck this amazing pose. The idea was to give this portrait a sharp edge with a modern look. I used many different shapes and brushes to create the atmosphere of a computer game



THE MAKING OF DOLPHINS

Here's how Svetlana created her image in Photoshop



01 Initial composite

The base underwater image, sky and planet were stacked in layers. By adding a vector mask and setting the Foreground to black, I wiped out some of the unwanted areas of the planet layer. I added a Gradient Overlay layer style and set the blending mode to Hard Light.



02 Create atmosphere

The mountain image was set to Multiply and I added a white vector mask to wipe out the unwanted areas. To keep all of the images the same tone, I went to Image>Adjustments>Match Color. A galaxy has been added just under the rays of white clouds. I duplicated the Background and brought it to the front.



03 Combine subjects

The city and shipwreck are colour matched to the background. On both of these layers I added a layer mask to get rid of unwanted areas with a Gaussian Blur, Opacity set to 27% and blending mode to Soft Light. I added moss covered rocks and weeds, blended in the water.



04 Duplicate dolphin

I removed the dolphin image's background using the Pen tool, smoothed the skin with the Smudge tool and used Dodge and Burn for a shiny effect. I duplicated the dolphin and positioned it on another layer. I used a motion blur this time to give it the effect of distant movement.



05 Adding waves

I placed the wave layer on top, matched the colour and added a mask. I erased any unwanted areas, adjusting the settings and opacity as required. I set the blending mode to Normal and Opacity to 100%. Using the Color Overlay layer style, I reset the blend mode to Color.

NOTES | DON'T BE SHY, GET IN TOUCH AND REVEAL A BIT ABOUT YOUR WORKING PRACTICES

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Readers' Gallery

Get involved with the Readers' Gallery and share your work with the world!



If anyone was ever in doubt as to the editing potential offered by Photoshop, a trip to the gallery pages on our website will soon quell that uncertainty.

You'll find a wealth of inspiration here, from simple photo edits through to complex composites, representing different genres. Our two reader galleries this issue are particularly inspirational.

Scott Nicklin's photo illustrations show it's possible to create an eye-catching design by merging photographs, while Souheil Abdesselam uses 3D models to create entirely new worlds.



Scott Nicklin

See more at: www.photoshopcreative.co.uk/user/gridfrnd



Pretty in Pink
"One of my interpretations of a modern day pin-up. It was created with lots of custom brushes and vibrant colours."

One Purple Moment
"I wanted to create something soft, colourful and sexy... the woman has a dreamy look that I really like. Again, lots of custom brushes and vibrant colours!"



Deus Ex Machina "The Ghost in the Machine. Here I wanted to portray the goddess of cyberspace. I used lots of metal parts and brush work."





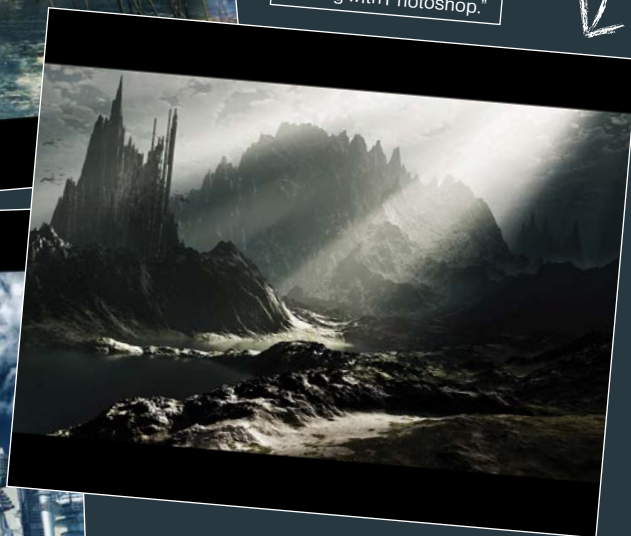
Souheil Abdesselam

See more at: www.photoshopcreative.co.uk/user/zenati



Amira Castle "I started with a sketch, then created some realistic textures with Photoshop. The landscape was created and rendered with Vue Infinite. I added the sun rays using Photoshop."

God Rays "This was created for a client. The subject was religion and he asked me to create a landscape with a very dramatic mood, showing a path lit by God rays. The landscape was created in Vue, and then I added the citadel on the left and enhanced the lighting with Photoshop."



Season City "The idea was to represent my vision of future architecture. I modelled this with 3ds Max, rendered with Vue and then carried out postproduction in Photoshop."

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Lens effects

Smooth out skin

Retouch photos with filters

Get to grips with the best filters Photoshop has to offer for high-level retouching techniques

When most people think of Photoshop filters they tend to think of some of the more artistic approaches used to magic a photograph into an oil painting, cross-stitch pattern or similar effects. In fact, the most commonly used Photoshop filters are regular staples of any pro retouching regime, whether the subject is fashion, sport, portraiture, landscape or still life. Far from being something tucked away in the menus purely for a bit of creative play, the selection of Filters contain powerful commands that no serious Photoshop user should be without. And these are the exact filters that we're going to highlight here; those that focus more on helping you create an ideal photo rather than the illustrative transformation side of Photoshop.

Sharp as a pin

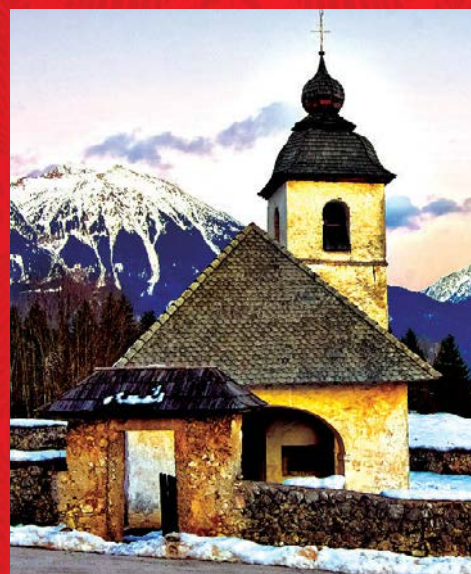
The first batch of filters to look at are the Sharpening filters. The most advantageous is undoubtedly Unsharp Mask, which can be used to perform a basic sharpening role as well as being put to more creative, edge contrast uses.

The process of digital capture has a natural softening effect on imagery because of the anti-aliasing filter used to prevent a phenomenon known as 'jaggies'; sharp jagged edges that make things look pixelated. Any image captured digitally, therefore, needs some form of sharpening to counteract that softening. If you shoot in JPEG mode, this sharpening will be applied automatically unless you've manually switched it off. If you shoot Raw for maximum quality, you'll need to apply that sharpening afterwards. It's better to do it in Photoshop than at the Raw processing stage because Camera Raw sharpening algorithms just don't look as good as Unsharp Mask.

Our Unsharp Mask (or USM) suggested settings shown in the walkthrough overleaf are for Raw images with no or minimal sharpening applied (the default settings are negligible and fine to use). Note too that the process of printing an image softens it once more, so you need to apply a little more sharpening if it is destined for print. And if the image is going to be reduced significantly in size for the web, there's a slightly different recipe to make sure the sharpening still shows up after the size reduction (sharpening after size reduction is generally not a good idea). It's also worth bearing in

Blur for
depth of field

Apply noise heavily to simulate the traditional film grain look. Great for black and white portraits



High-Radius, low-Amount Unsharp Mask is a popular technique for increasing contrast and making images really jump off the page



The Sharpen filters

Sharpening is a vital part of any retouch workflow

We are going to focus on two filters in the sharpening tool kit; Unsharp Mask and Smart Sharpen. Unsharp Mask should be your default sharpening tool and should be used for preparing images for both screen and print, the latter requiring more sharpening than the former. A good general recipe (assuming

nothing else is done in Raw) is an Amount of 250% for full-size screen and 350% for print, both with a Radius of 0.5 pixels. For web-sized images, sharpen before you size down and use a Radius of 2.0 and an Amount of 80%. Smart Sharpen is best reserved for removing motion blur, as described below.



Startphoto

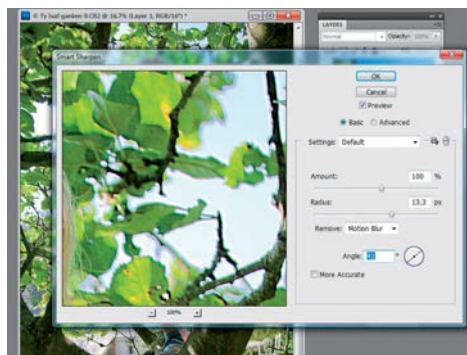


After

“Unsharp Mask should be your default sharpening tool and should be used for preparing images for both screen and print, the latter requiring more sharpening”



01 Unsharp Mask Sharpen your image on a separate layer to preserve all of the underlying information. Select the background layer and use Ctrl/Cmd+J to create a merged duplicate layer on top. Then simply go to Filter>Sharpen>Unsharp Mask and use the settings as described above.



02 Smart Sharpen For images blurred by camera shake or moving subjects, create a duplicate and run Filter>Sharpen>Smart Sharpen. Choose Motion Blur from the Remove menu and experiment with the Amount, Radius and Angle dials until the problem is reduced. Be warned, depending on the level of blur, you may not achieve complete perfection.



Adding a touch of noise can help increase the sharpness of an image not responding to Unsharp Mask

mind that an image that's slightly soft (ie slightly out of focus) can be rescued with a bit of stronger sharpening. Instead of the standard suggested settings, try using a Radius of 2.0 and around 150-200% for soft looking, high-res images (or 100% instead of 80% for web size).

One more technique is high-Radius, low-Amount USM, which essentially involves pushing the sharpening edge out so as to increase local contrast in the image, a popular look in advertising. Try a setting of 30% and 80 pixels on a high-resolution image to see how this works. Smart Sharpen doesn't bring any advantages over Unsharp Mask for standard sharpening, but it does have the advantage of offering some improvement for images suffering from movement blur because of subject blur or camera shake. It takes some fiddling to register an improvement, but can push an image into the realms of acceptability if it's not too severe to start out.

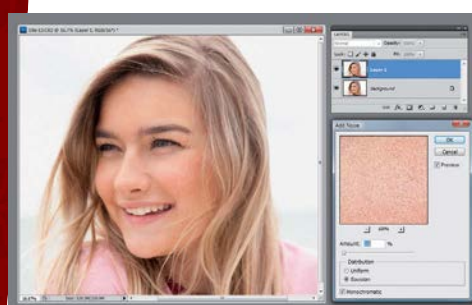
Quieten the noise

Next come the Noise filters, and the three you're most likely to be putting to use are Add Noise, Reduce Noise and Dust and Scratches. Add Noise does as you'd expect (the slider allows you to control how much

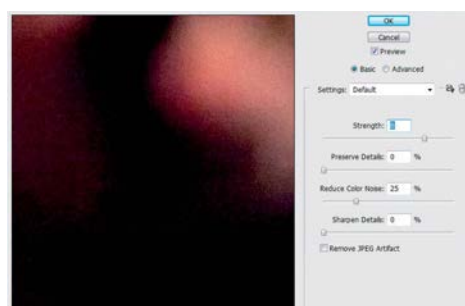
The Noise filters

Add noise, reduce it and restore old photos

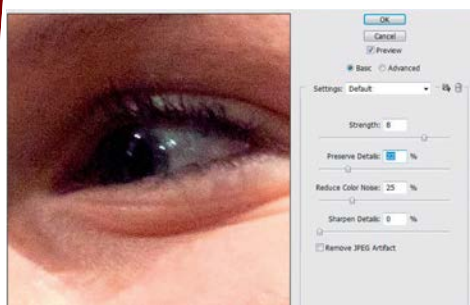
There are three great filters in the Noise subsection: Add Noise, Reduce Noise and Dust and Scratches – each with a very different use. Add Noise is great for sticking in a bit of noise to areas that look unnaturally smooth, such as skin if you've done some smoothing with the Gaussian Blur filter. Reduce Noise is generally used for images shot at high ISO speeds and can be used via a layer mask to concentrate it in the worst areas. Dust and Scratches is great for cleaning up old photos, and for removing sensor dust from areas of even tone like sky.



01 Add Noise To add noise, select the Background layer and use Ctrl/Cmd+J to create a duplicate layer on top. Then simply go to Filter>Noise>Add Noise. Select Gaussian and Monochromatic and alter the slider to suit. Go harder than you might need, as you can always opt to drop the layer's opacity afterwards.



02 Reduce Noise To reduce noise instead, create a duplicate layer as before and run Filter>Noise>Reduce Noise. Click and drag to navigate to an area of even tone where noise is obvious. Move up the Strength slider until it's all but removed.

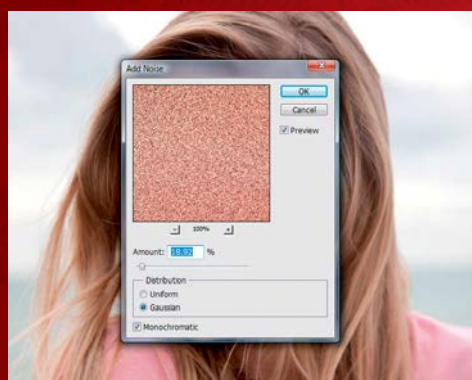


03 Reduce Noise sliders Next, navigate back to an area with fine detail in. It will appear softened by the work (click Preview on and off to compare). Push Preserve Details up until you reach a good compromise and sharpness. Leave Sharpen Details at 0.



04 Dust and Scratches Create a duplicate as above. Now run Filter>Noise>Dust and Scratches. Move the slider up until all of the dust or scratches are removed. OK the dialog and add a layer mask. Invert with Ctrl/Cmd+I and paint over the dust or scratches only.

is added) and it's generally a more uniform and pleasing noise than the sort you try to remove from high ISO images. It's essentially just light and dark speckles of pixels that sit on top of your image, and can be used to create a film noise



It's better to add too much noise than have too little as you can always drop the noise layer opacity afterwards

look for a grittier feel when blurred by 0.5 pixels (if it looks a little sharp). If applied without blur, a little added noise can also be used to sharpen up an otherwise soft-looking picture that isn't responding quite well enough to Unsharp Mask; the jagged edges of the noise create a false sense of sharpness. It's a subtle increase but one the pros often put to use, especially for magazine reproduction where the speckled nature of paper will let you get away with a bit more than screen or inkjet print.

Aside from creating the film noise look (especially good for black and white photographs) and improving soft-looking images, these filters can be used to hide stubborn ISO noise that can't be removed. ISO noise tends to be most prominent in the shadows, leaving an image looking patchy. By adding a layer of noise over the image as a whole, it looks a little more deliberate, less

Tip!

Distortion

Users of Photoshop CS5 can get lens distortion corrected automatically with the many lens profiles included in the Auto Correction tab of Filters>Lens Correction. Users of older versions will need to use the Distortion slider to manually correct the issue (pre-CS5, go to Filter>Distort>Lens Correction). Wide angle lenses typically suffer from barrel distortion (bulging out from the centre) while telephoto lenses suffer to a lesser extent from pincushion distortion (dipping in at the centre). Clicking Show Grid will help enormously for precise correction if your image contains lines of any kind, otherwise there is a little bit of guesswork involved.

The Blur filters

Put three of the best Blur filters into action for great effects

The top Blur filters to use for common types of photography are the Gaussian Blur, Motion Blur and Radial Blur filters. A Gaussian blur is pretty much a standard blur and is useful for smoothing out areas of pixels, such as the skin in a portrait. Motion Blur blurs pixels in a particular direction and can be used to simulate the motion of a moving subject with a slow shutter speed – especially useful if you can cut out a moving subject from a still background. Radial Blur creates a circular movement and is great for simulating the spinning motion of bike or car wheels.



startphoto



After

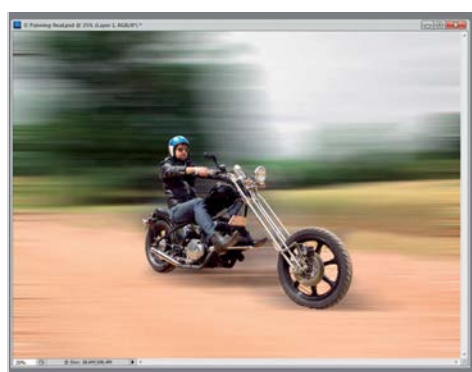


01 Gaussian Blur If you're using it to apply local smoothing to an area like skin, it's best applied on a duplicate layer as per the previous walkthroughs. Then simply use Filter>Blur>Gaussian Blur around 5-10 pixels for skin. Add a layer mask, invert with Ctrl/Cmd+I and paint onto the skin only with a white brush.

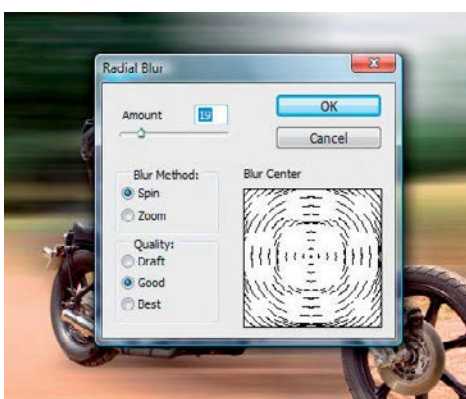


02 Motion Blur selection

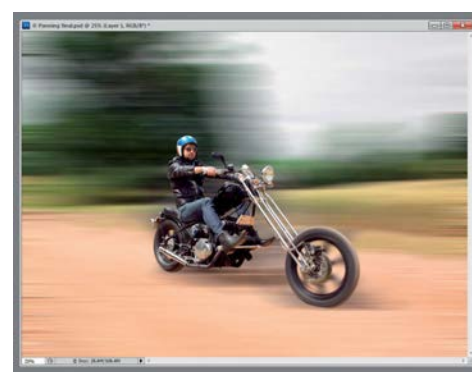
Motion Blur is great for simulating movement in a subject otherwise frozen on camera. You can either blur the edges of the subject itself or the background, to suggest the in-camera panning technique has been used. Either way, you need to cut out the subject first with the Pen or other selection tool.



03 Apply a motion blur To blur the background, inverse the selection with Ctrl/Cmd+Shift+I and float to a new layer with Ctrl/Cmd+J. Ctrl/right-click the layer to load it as a selection, then add a layer mask. Now select the layer itself (not the mask) and run Filter>Blur>Motion Blur. Choose the correct Angle and Distance to suit your image.

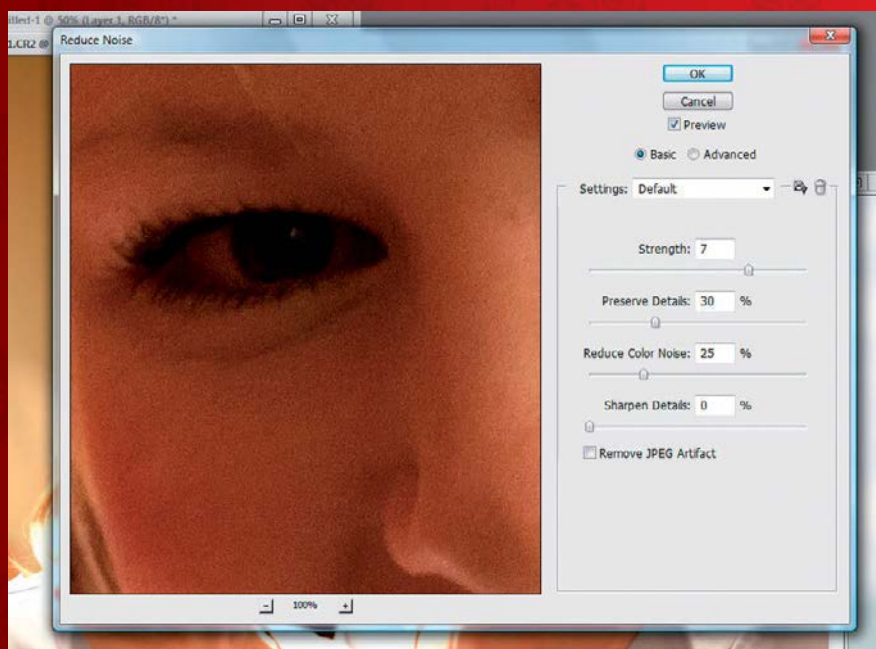


04 Radial Blur selection If you've used the Motion Blur filter to blur the background of a car or bicycle, you still need to re-create the circular motion of the wheels for an authentic panning-technique finish. The only way to do this is using Radial Blur. Start by selecting the first wheel with your chosen method.



05 Apply the Radial Blur With the wheel selected, float to a new layer with Ctrl/Cmd+J. Ctrl/right-click the layer to load the selection. Now run Filter>Blur>Radial Blur. You'll have to guess at a strength setting as there's no live preview. You can Undo and try again if it doesn't look right, then repeat for any of the other wheels on show in the picture.

“Gaussian blur is a standard blur, useful for smoothing out pixels, such as skin. Motion Blur blurs in one direction, while Radial Blur creates a circular movement”



Noise reduction for high ISO images will inevitably involve some compromise between noise removal and detail preservation

the product of camera failings, and generally more palatable too. The final use for noise is the one that we've included in the walkthrough, which is to simulate a bit of texture in otherwise smooth out problem areas in skin for example, you'll need to add noise to prevent the area looking over-retouched and artificial. Noise (again an idea to blur it by 0.5 pixels if it looks too sharp) can simulate natural texture and restore a bit of reality.

In light of the advances in the noise reduction algorithms of the latest versions of Lightroom and Adobe Camera Raw CS5 (they are phenomenal), you may find yourself with less of a need to use the Reduce Noise filter for high ISO images if you're running these versions. Still, you do have the advantage in Photoshop of being able to apply noise reduction locally with the use of a layer mask. If the noise is only really visible in shadow areas, there's no need to

compromise detail in unaffected areas with a global adjustment. We haven't detailed this in the walkthrough, but it just involves creating a duplicate layer, running the Reduce Noise filter, adding a layer mask using the button at the bottom of the Layers palette, inverting it with Ctrl/Cmd+I and brushing into the affected areas with a white

“You have the advantage in Photoshop of being able to apply noise reduction locally with the use of a layer mask. There's no need to compromise detail”

brush. Users of older Photoshop versions should do the noise reduction here, and again you've got the option of a layer mask if needs be.

Dust and Scratches is the third most commonly used filter in the Noise category and is essentially about removing elements larger and less frequent than noise, such as sensor or scanning dust, or small scratches on an old photograph. It attempts to do this without affecting edge detail and sometimes gives really good results with dust disappearing in even-tone areas such as sky, leaving nothing else affected. More often than not though, there is some effect on nearby detail, so again this is best used in conjunction with a layer mask so you can focus on the dust or scratches without



The Dust and Scratches filter is great for repairing even the most damaged of precious old photos

causing any softening elsewhere. Definitely one for photo restorers.

Using and deleting blur

Next come the Blur filters and king of the list here is the Gaussian Blur filter, which has so many uses and applications. In the walkthrough we show how it can be used to smooth skin, but the same technique can be used to smooth

Tip!

Vignette

The Vignette slider reduces the phenomenon of vignetting, or darkening at the corners of the image, most commonly associated with wide angle lenses open at the widest of apertures. If it's not clear if your image contains vignetting, small corrections with the slider can help with this. Midpoint controls how far towards the centre the correction falls (usually the default setting is good) while Amount controls the strength of the removal. By using negative Amount settings, you can actually introduce vignetting into your picture, a technique sometimes used by photographers to focus the eye towards the centre of the frame, to the subject and away from the image edges.



Images with lots of busy detail are more adept at hiding the problems of noise so need less noise removal

Feature



If you're willing to spend time cutting out your subject, you can use the Lens Blur to throw the background out of focus

anything that might look a little rough; the creases in clothing or perhaps marks on an otherwise clean floor, or you might use the Gaussian Blur to soften over-enthusiastic noise. Whenever you use blur, add a touch of noise just to restore a sense of reality.

Gaussian blur can also be used to feather a layer mask. If you've masked an area on an adjustment layer, for instance, only to find that the transition between the adjusted and non-adjusted part is too sharp and obvious, run the Gaussian Blur filter with the layer mask selected and all of a sudden that transition becomes smooth and imperceptible.

Keeping it even

Surface and Smart Blur kind of attempt to do what Gaussian Blur does without affecting edge detail, so the focus is more on areas of even tone like skin. In practice, it's far better to apply a Gaussian blur through a mask as you have that much more control and much more of an opportunity to prevent the blur straying into areas it shouldn't.



You can use Lens correction to emphasise traditional effects such as fish eye lens

There are two other blur filters that can be put to creative use; Motion Blur and Radial Blur. One popular in-camera technique is panning, which involves following a moving subject with your camera as you press the shutter. The result keeps the moving subject relatively sharp while the background appears to blur, creating a sense of movement in a still photograph. In practice it's a very hard technique to master and easier to apply in Photoshop with the Motion Blur filter as described on the previous page. The Radial Blur filter is a necessary accompaniment if the

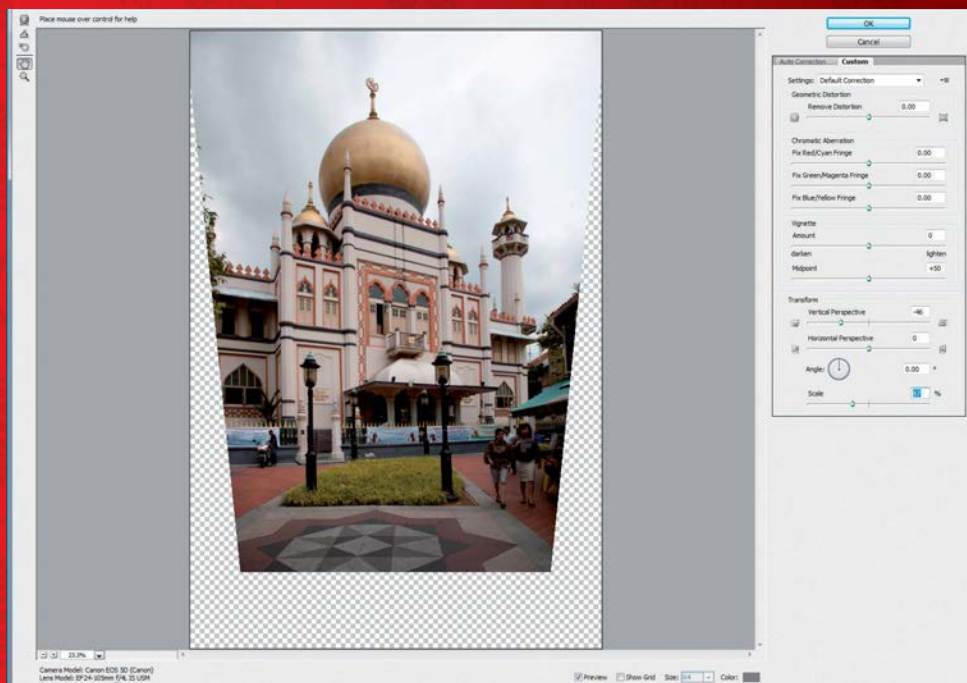
Tip!

Transform

The Transform command isn't about correcting lens defects but rectifying issues of perspective caused by the position of the camera sensor in ratio to the subject. If you shoot looking up at a building, for example, you will see the natural phenomenon of converging verticals, where the building edges appear to move towards each other with distance. The Vertical slider can be used to correct this. The Horizontal slider can be used for situations where you haven't got quite square on to a subject like a building, when the horizontals appear to move inwards to the left or right.

subject has wheels as it perfectly re-creates the circular motion of a spinning car or bicycle wheel to finish off the effect.

One more filter you might have encountered is Lens Blur, and this attempts to simulate the defocused look of a lens set at a wide aperture. It's a complex technique to master as you're applying a three-dimensional effect to a two-dimensional image, so it only really works when you've got a simple subject separated by quite a distance from its background. It tends to work best when accentuating bokeh (defocused blur) that's already present in an image. If the background contains raised objects at different distances, you can encounter real trouble unless



When fixing lens problems, you may need to reduce the Scale slider when running Transform to avoid losing parts of the image

you're willing to paint manually into a layer mask, or defocus things so strongly that nothing behind is recognisable. If you can, it's far easier to try and master the technique in-camera than apply it in Photoshop with tricky selections and masking.

Using and deleting blur

One lens-based filter that works exceptionally well is the Lens Correction filter. The tip boxes cover the most commonly used aspects of this filter – distortion, vignette and transform – but the Chromatic Aberration section is also great for those lenses that display problems with colour fringing along high contrast edges. Photoshop CS5 users are treated with an Auto Correction tab which contains profiles to apply automatic adjustments for a variety of camera lenses. If you've yet to make the upgrade, you've got to apply your corrections manually and the individual tips should help you there. Note

“Photoshop CS5 users are treated with an Auto Correction tab which contains profiles to apply automatic adjustments, making this a one-stop shop for lens correction”

that Lens Correction is found in Filter>Lens Correction in CS5, and Filter>Distort>Lens Correction in the versions prior.

We apply virtually all the filters here on a duplicate of the Background layer so that the original Background remains unaffected. This duplicate should be located underneath any adjustment layers you might have added, so if you wish to alter these down the line you can do so without any of the filter work being affected. One clever alternative is to turn the Background layer into a Smart Object by right-clicking it and selecting Convert to Smart Object. You can now apply filters to the Background layer directly and they will sit underneath the layer as smart filters. You can then remove the filter any time you wish, or alter the settings by double-clicking it.

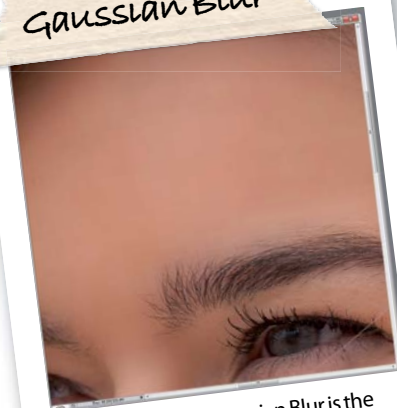
Work through the techniques suggested here and you'll find that the Filters menu offers a wealth of photo-editing potential for creating your ideal image.

Filters for portraits

Combine a range of filters in one image for the perfect retouch results

All three of the main filter groups can be put to use with a portrait retouch session; the Blur, Noise and Sharpen options all play a role. The Gaussian Blur filter can produce a wonderfully smooth look for skin and Add Noise simulates texture to keep that smoothness looking real. Reduce Noise is great for low light portraits, Smart Sharpen for removing motion blur, and Unsharp Mask can be used to perfect the most important part of any portrait – the eyes.

Gaussian Blur



Smoothing skin Gaussian Blur is the perfect filter for a bit of skin smoothing. Apply it through a mask to ensure that it doesn't destroy important detail

Add Noise



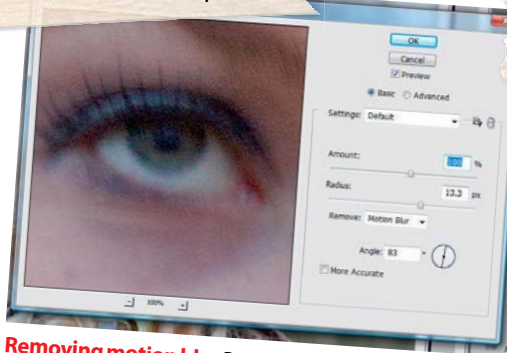
Simulating texture Once skin has been smoothed, you can prevent it looking unnatural and simulate real skin texture with a little added noise

Reduce Noise



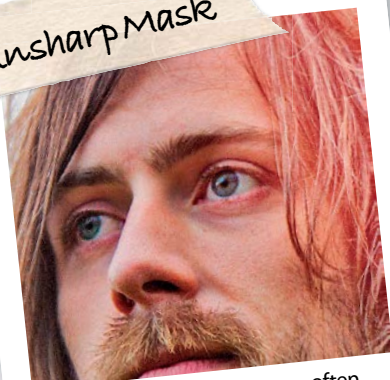
Reducing noise Low-light portraits captured at a high ISO speed can be improved fairly simply using the Reduce Noise filter along with a little bit of slider experimentation

Smart Sharpen



Removing motion blur Portraits blurred by either camera shake or subject movement can be improved with the Remove Blur controls in Smart Sharpen

Unsharp Mask



Sharpening eyes The eyes can often benefit from some extra sharpening with USM and a layer mask. This can rescue an otherwise soft-looking image

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PHOTOSHOP CREATIVE 31

Understand the Displace filter

Harness the power of the Displace filter and create stunning artwork

In this tutorial we'll attempt to demystify the Displace filter. You'll find this potent feature tucked away with the Distort filters where it's remained unchanged since the very first release of Photoshop.

The Displace filter uses the brightness values of one file to shift pixels in another. This filter requires two separate files – the target file and a displacement file – which can either be the same pixel dimensions for predictable results, or a different size for unexpected results. Pixels can be

distorted either horizontally or vertically and by positive or negative values. The Scale setting determines the distance of movement, the Stretch To Fit option decides how a different sized displacement map will appear and Tile will repeat image areas. The Wrap Around option reflects back pixels that appear outside the canvas and the Repeat Edge Pixels option will fill any gaps with whatever tonal range the image boundary contained.

Don't be daunted; this tutorial's not rocket science. We'll demonstrate how

to combine paths with a channel mask to extract the main subject. After that we will show how to make your own displacement map. We've supplied additional displacement maps, grunge brushes and some custom shapes on the CD, but you will need to download a free texture ('1.jpg') from <http://lostandtaken.com/blog/2010/9/5/8-colorful-grunge-textures-lt-news.html>. We'd like to thank our friends over at mediamilitia.com for allowing us to use its 3D renders and paint splashes for the displacement files.

essentials

SKILL LEVEL

Beginner
Intermediate
Expert

TIME TAKEN

3 hours

YOUR EXPERT

Mark Mayers

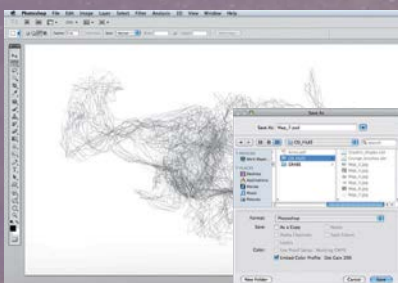
ON THE DISC

Start files

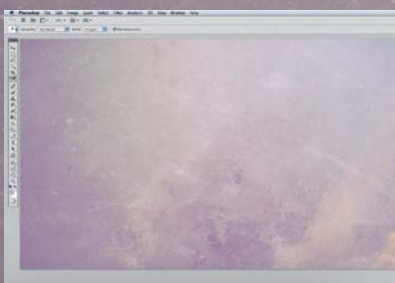


LET'S GET SELECTIVE

Combine a path with a channel mask to accurately extract the model



01 Preparation is the key The Displace filter only handles 8-bit PSD files, and because of disc space we've had to compress them. Open 'Map_2.jpg' through to 'Map_7.jpg' from your disc and save them as PSD files in a handy location. You'll notice our files are greyscale, but RGB and CMYK files will work just as well. The filter only uses information from the first two channels.



02 Add some texture Set your Background colour to #c9b5cb and create a new RGB document of 48cm x 29cm at 300dpi with the Background Contents set to Background Color. Add '1.jpg' from the Lost and Taken site as a new layer. Hit Ctrl/Cmd+T, and then enlarge to cover your canvas. Change the blend mode to Soft Light and label this layer Texture.



03 Duplicate channel Open the model image (ours is from iStock, image number 000000293141 or use the alternative on the disc) and Flip Horizontal. Switch to your Channels tab and identify which one holds the most contrast for the hair. Drag its thumbnail over the Create New Channel icon to duplicate it. Press Ctrl/Cmd+L to access Levels then set blackpoint to 99 and midpoint to 0.73.

WORKS WITH | PHOTOSHOP CS AND ABOVE



KEY SKILLS COVERED

What you'll learn

LAYER BLEND
MODES
THE PEN TOOL
CHANNEL MASKS
DISPLACEMENT
MAPS
THE DISPLACE
FILTER
LAYER MASKS
THE APPLY IMAGE
COMMAND
THE SHAPE TOOL





CREATE A HALFTONE DISPLACEMENT MAP

Add the model and apply the Displace filter



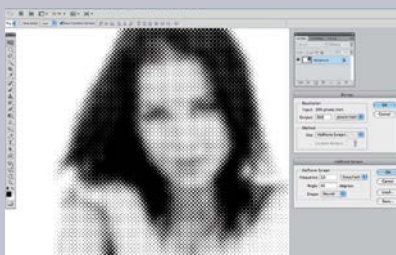
04 Plot a path Set the Pen tool to Paths in the Options bar and draw a closed path around the model, keeping it accurate around the body and loose within the hairline as indicated in red. Ctrl/Cmd-click your path thumbnail to generate a selection, target your duplicate layer and fill with black. Now press Ctrl/Cmd+I to invert the channel to negative.



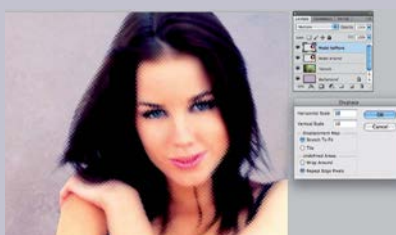
05 Import the model Ctrl/Cmd-click your duplicate channel to load the white areas as a selection, then target the top RGB composite channel and Copy>Paste as a new layer within your project file. Name this layer Model Original and choose Layer>Deffringe by 2px to remove any stray pixels. Next, enlarge the layer and position it on the right edge of your canvas.



06 Displacement duplicate Select All and choose Crop from the Image menu. Target your Background layer and with the selection still active, copy it. Create a new greyscale document with a white background and accept the Clipboard preset. Deselect, then Shift-drag the Model Original layer thumbnail over as a new layer. Flatten, and then apply a Gaussian Blur of 30px.



07 Bitmap halftone effect Choose Image>Mode>Bitmap and in the next window set the Output to 300dpi. Select Halftone Screen under Method and hit OK. In the next dialog box, enter the following: Frequency 10 lines/inch, Angle , Shape Round. Next, convert the file to Grayscale with a Size Ratio of 1, then save it as 'Map_1.psd' to a memorable location.



08 Dotty distortion Duplicate the Model Original layer and rename it Model Halftone. Go to Filter>Distort>Displace. Keep the default settings of 10 for both Scale fields and the Stretch To Fit and Repeat Edge Pixels buttons checked, then navigate to and load the 'Map_1.psd' file from the previous step. Now change the layer's blend mode to Multiply to reveal the underlying layers.

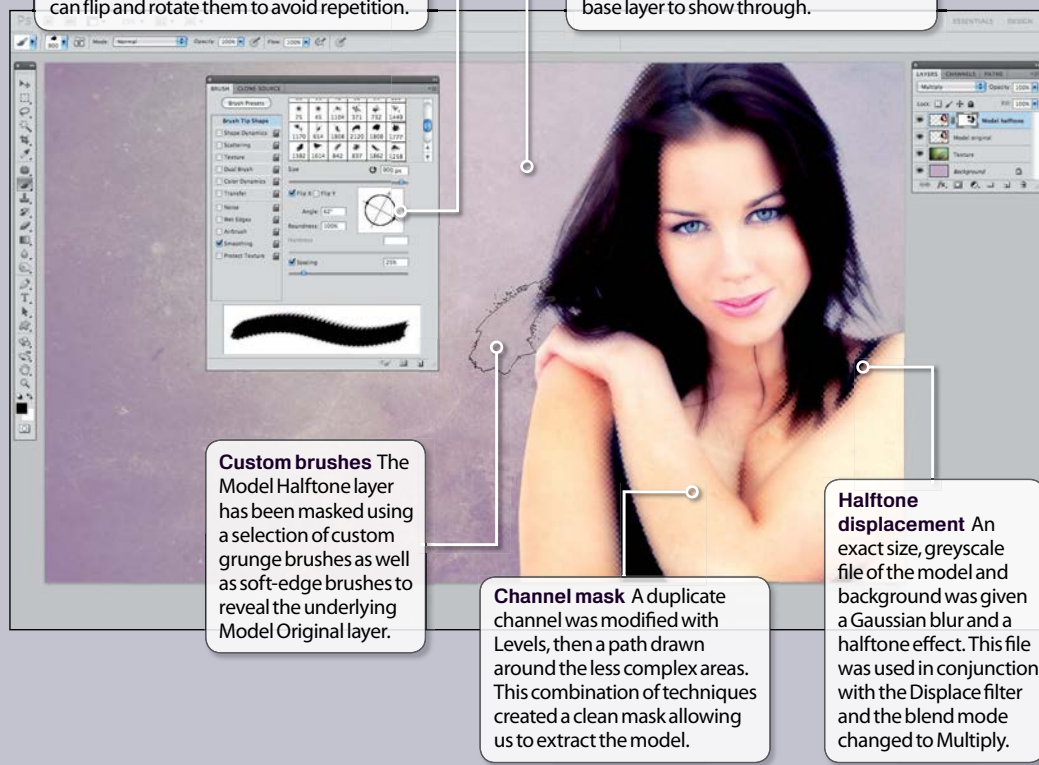


Displace and distort for images with edge

Key tools and techniques to create the effect

Brush options The grunge brushes on the CD are image-based, so apply them in a stamping fashion, then open the Brush palette from the Options bar. From here you can flip and rotate them to avoid repetition.

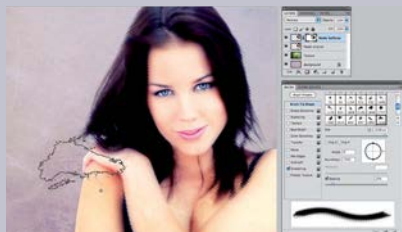
Subtle texture To break up an otherwise boring background, a Texture layer has been added in the Soft Light mode for a subtle effect, and also to allow the mauve base layer to show through.





EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED

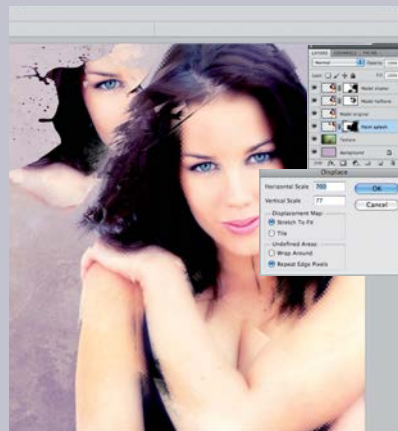
Use 3D renders and paint splashes for creative results



09 Introduce some grunge Add a mask to the Model Halftone layer, then load the 'Grunge_brushes.abr' from the CD. Use an assortment of brush tips in a stamping fashion over selective areas but don't forget to rotate and flip them in the Brush panel to avoid the look of repetitive strokes. Next, use a soft-edged brush around the inner of the model's hairline.



10 Splice it up Duplicate the Model Original layer again, place it at the top of the stack and rename it Model Shatter. Displace again, setting the Horizontal Scale to -100 and the Vertical Scale to -20, then load 'Map_2.psd' from the CD. We don't want the displacement to interfere with the face, so apply the same masking technique as previously.



11 Splash out Duplicate the Model Original layer once more and Displace, this time increasing the Horizontal Scale to 700 and the Vertical Scale to 77, then load 'Map_3.psd'. Name this layer Paint Splash and place it below the Model Original layer. Reposition, add a mask, then hide all of the model's figure apart from her face and her hand.



12 3D displacement Create another duplicate of the Model original which will, by default, sit on top of the original. Displace, and increase the Horizontal Scale to 800, the Vertical Scale to 700, and then check the Tile and Wrap Around options. Load 'Map_4.psd', add a mask and apply the same techniques to hide areas, finally renaming this new layer Model Shatter 2.



13 Inverted mask For a subtle effect, duplicate the Model Shatter 2 layer and change its blend mode to Overlay. Target the mask thumbnail and hit Ctrl/Cmd+I to invert it. You can now use an assortment of white brushes to modify the mask as required.



14 Composite layer Disable the visibility of the Background and Texture layers then place a new one at the top and label it Shatter Merged. Choose Image>Apply Image and click OK in the next window to create a composite layer. Displace and reduce the Horizontal Scale to -70 and the Vertical Scale to -40, check Stretch To Fit and Wrap Around, then load 'Map_5.psd'.



15 Selective masking Position the Shatter Merged layer above the Model Original layer. Repeat the masking process with a selection of grunge and soft-edged brushes, then enable the visibility of the bottom two layers. At this stage the Model Original layer can also be masked selectively.



16 Add another splash Create another duplicate of the Model Original layer, label it Paint Splash 2 and move it above the Texture layer. Open the Displace filter and set the Horizontal Scale to the maximum 999 and the Vertical to 400. Check Stretch To Fit and Repeat Edge Pixels, then load 'Map_6.psd'. Rotate anti-clockwise and re-position.

Tip



Realise the potential

As we mentioned, this filter has remained unchanged for years. That's probably why the dialog box has no preview window, so if you don't like the result you have to undo the filter and try again. As with many things, trial and error is the only way to understand its full potential. This filter, along with its cousin, the Glass filter, can also be used to map flat artwork to uneven surfaces such as a wrinkled garment or a brick wall.



FINALISE THE COMPOSITION

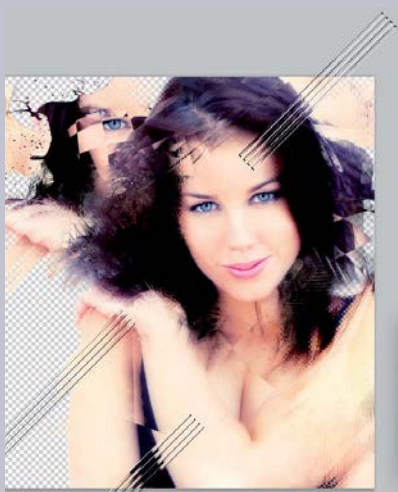
Add the final displacements, then some graphic elements



17 Wireframe displacement Repeat step 14 to create another composite layer at the top of the stack and name it Lines Shatter. Run the Displace filter and set the Horizontal Scale to -44 and the Vertical to -55. Check the Stretch To Fit and Repeat Edge Pixels options and load 'Map_7.psd'. Reposition it over the original layer and mask.

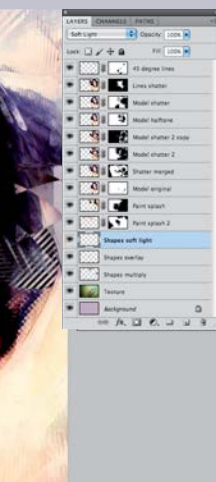


18 Horizontal bars Set the Shape tool to Shape Layers and select the Rectangle icon in the Options bar. Add an elongated rectangle shape then duplicate it three times. Shift-drag to roughly space them vertically, then Shift-click to highlight all four layer thumbnails and go to Layer>Distribute>Vertical Centers to align.



19 45-degree distortion

Press Ctrl/Cmd to merge these layers, then Shift-rotate 45 degrees and reposition over the model. Ctrl/Cmd-click to load the layer as a selection, then disable its visibility. Add a new layer below it and open the Displace filter. Set both Scale fields to 80, select Stretch To Fit and Repeat Edge Pixels, then load 'Map_1.psd' again.



20 Shape up

Invert your selection, hit Backspace and call the layer 45-degree Lines. Mask with soft-edged brushes, then delete the temporary bars layer. Load 'Graphic_shapes.csh' from the CD and place some black shapes (in Multiply and Overlay modes) and some white shapes (in Soft Light mode) above the Texture layer.

Layer structure

Understand the image

Finishing touches

45-degree lines

Lines shatter

Model shatter

Model halftone

Model shatter 2

Shatter merged

Model original

Paint splash

Paint splash 2

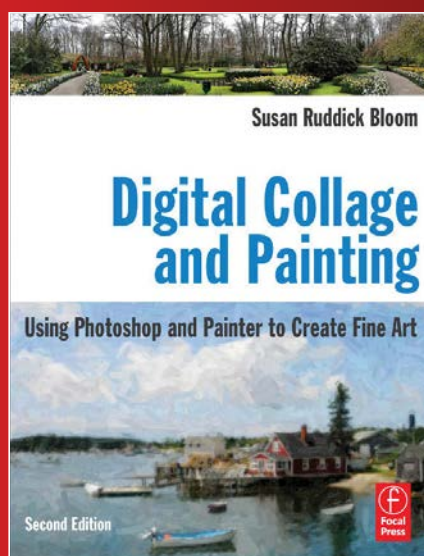
Shapes

Texture

Background

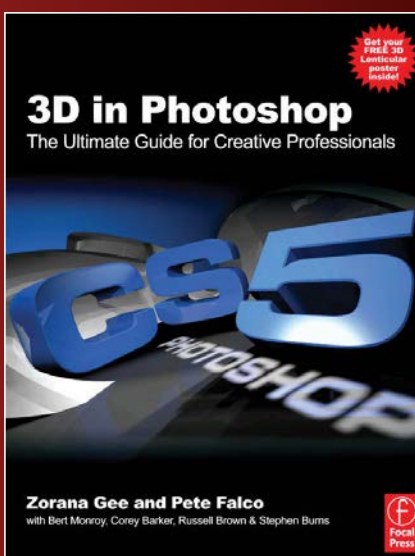


Take Photoshop to the Next level



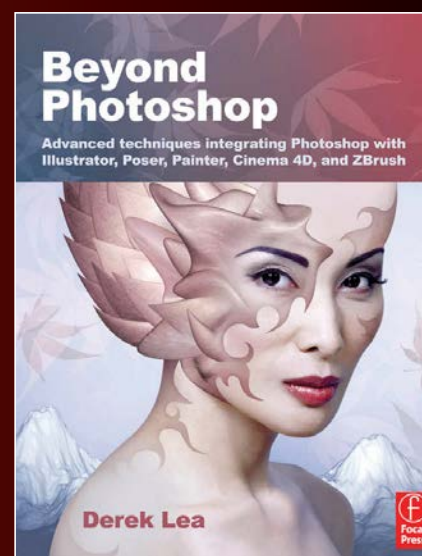
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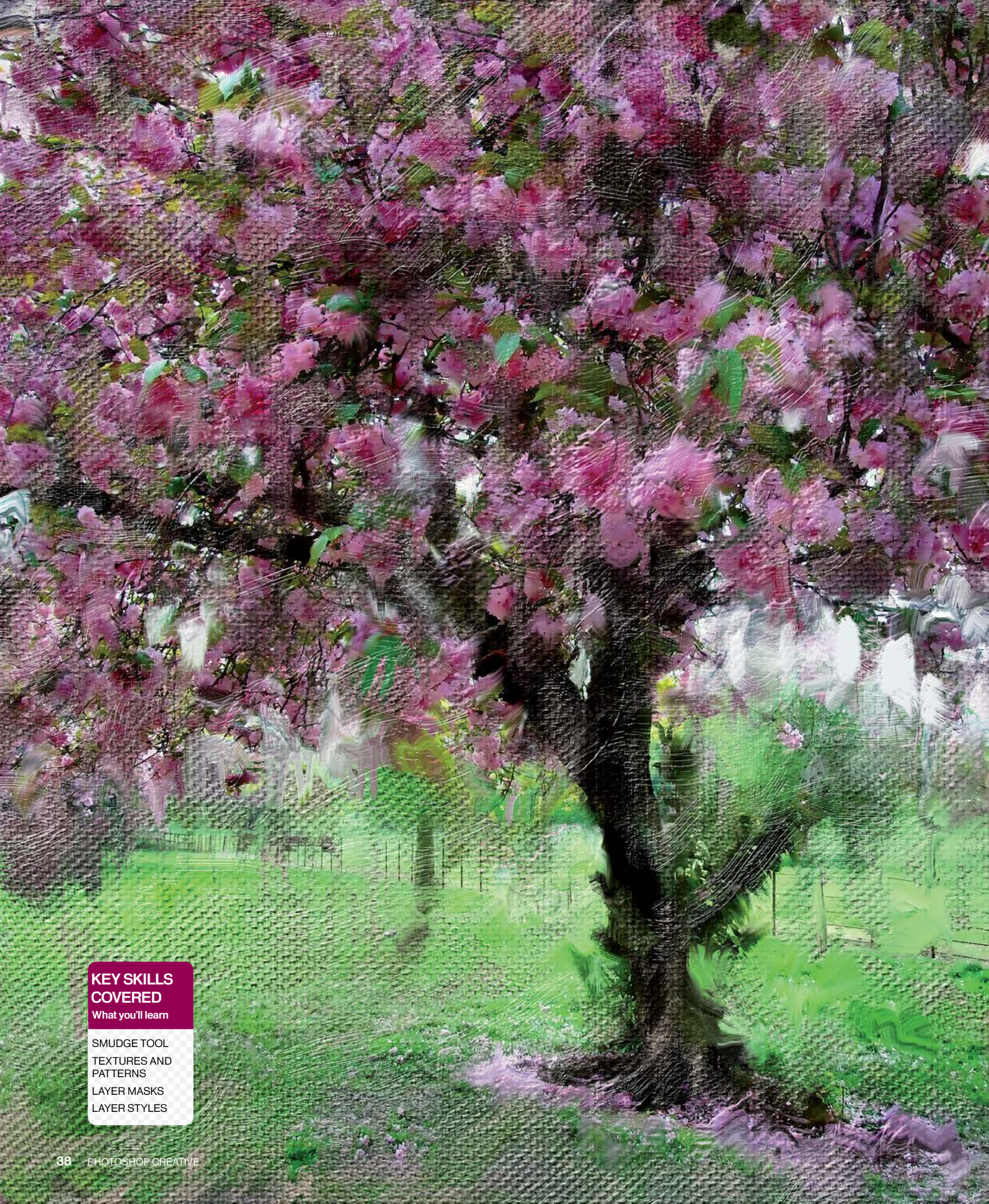


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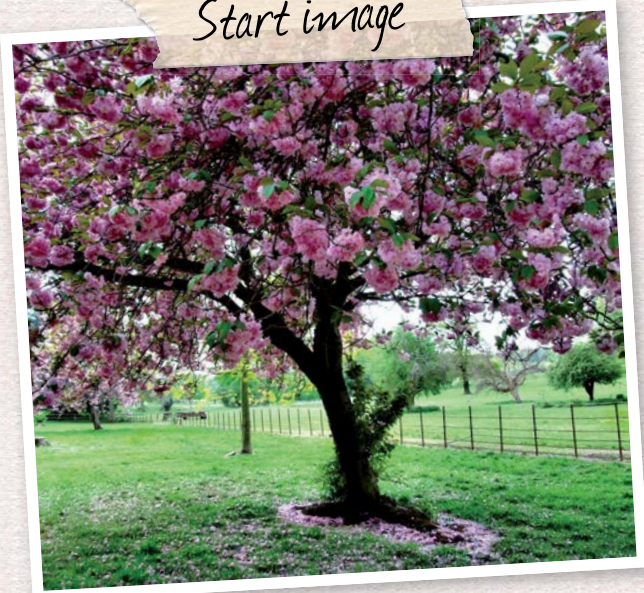
KEY SKILLS COVERED

What you'll learn

SMUDGE TOOL
TEXTURES AND PATTERNS
LAYER MASKS
LAYER STYLES



Start image



Textured paintings

Use the power of layer masks, textures and layer styles to create a luscious, digital oil painting



Oil paintings are not just about colour. One of the most vital aspects of any oil artwork is the tactile surface texture of the finished piece.

This dynamic surface really makes you want to reach out and touch the painting, adding enormously to its impact and appeal. In terms of digital painting, this is often the one component that's sadly lacking in the finished piece, so here we're going to concentrate on reproducing the luscious, tactile surface of oils in Photoshop.

We'll begin by creating the painting itself from a photographic start image using layer masks and brushes to selectively reveal parts of individual layers, building up a complex, painterly look. We'll build each layer with increasing depth of detail to create the painterly effect.

By using a canvas texture and an embossing effect along the way, we'll evoke both the look and feel of an almost touchable canvas surface. We'll add to this textural interest by painting on to layers which have a 0 Fill value coupled with a layer style to replicate the effect of really thick, expressive paint, the effect known as impasto where the medium appears raised from the canvas.

By the end of this painterly Photoshop project, you will be able to create a vital, tactile-looking surface that can enhance what lies beneath and add an extra dimension to your favourite images.

essentials

SKILL LEVEL

- Beginner
- Intermediate**
- Expert

TIME TAKEN

5.5 hours

YOUR EXPERT

Tim Shelbourne

ON THE DISC

blossom
start.jpg
pp-canvas.
pat



WORKS WITH | PHOTOSHOP CS AND ABOVE

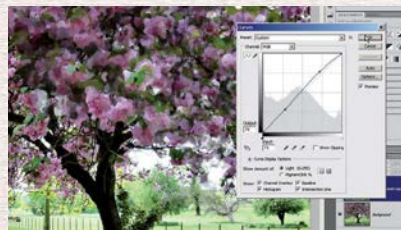


MAKE A BROAD, SWEEPING STATEMENT

Begin with a very loose underpainting



01 Tone and colour Open the start photo, duplicate the Background layer and choose the Art History brush. Click the down-pointing arrow next to the Tool Preset box at the far right of the Options bar and choose Reset Tool. Paint over the entire image with the ABH as its default setting.



02 Curve ball There are a couple of colour and tonal tweaks needed. Go to Image>Adjustments>Curves and place two points on the curve as shown in the screenshot, so that the midtones and highlights are lightened. If you are using CS4 or 5 you can go to Image>Adjustments>Vibrance and slightly increase both the Vibrance and Saturation sliders as well (or use Hue/Saturation).



03 Mess it up! Choose the Smudge tool then, from the Brush drop-down, choose the Spatter 46 brush. Set the Blur tool Strength to 65% and the size of the brush to around 125 pixels. Use them both with short, random strokes, roughly following the forms of the original image to blend the colours and create a basic underpainting.

Tip



The colour of light

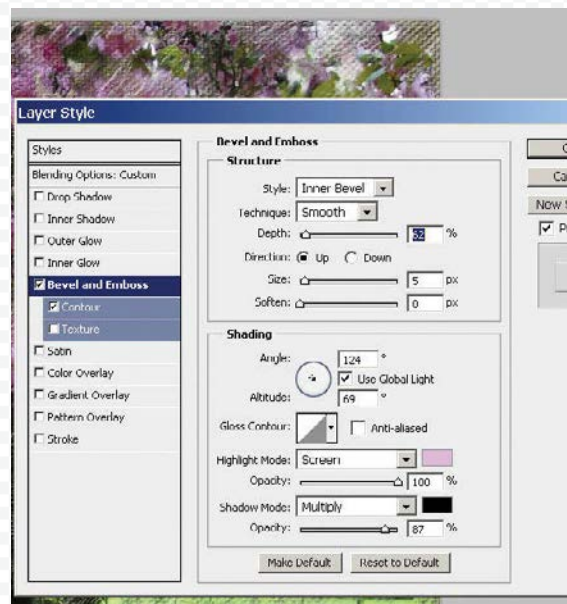
By default, the simulated highlights on the impasto effect via the layer style are white. You can change this to whatever colour you wish, though, to make the impasto even more effective. Double-click the entry for the Bevel and Emboss layer style on the Layers palette. Click on the small colour swatch next to the Highlight Mode setting and choose a more suitable colour from the Color Picker. A good colour for the impasto highlights within the tree is a very light pink.



Impressive impasto

Bevel and Emboss for tactile layers

The use of the Bevel and Emboss layer style is key to making the impasto effect work in this painting. It's a simple layer style, but the settings and the way it's used are quite specific. For shallow impasto (used on the first impasto layer), set Technique to Smooth and Depth to 1. Set Size and Soften to 0. The Angle must be set to 124 and Altitude to 69 degrees. It's also important to check the Contour option on the left side of the Layer Style dialog. For the thicker impasto on subsequent layers set Depth to 62 and Size to 5.

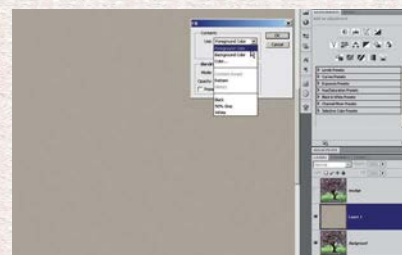


Tip

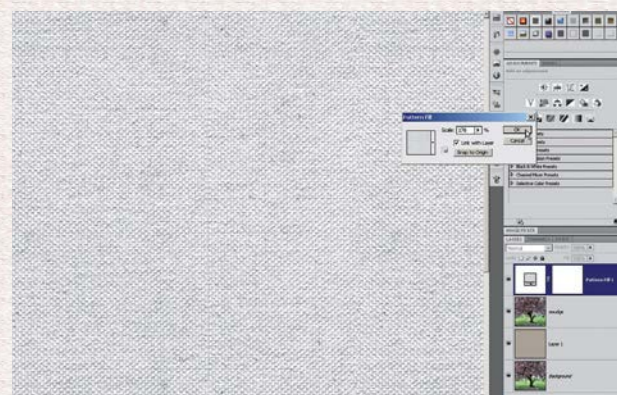


The law of layer masks

It's vital that you paint only on the layer masks and not on their associated image layer. To make sure of this, before you start painting, click directly on the black layer mask thumbnail in the Layers palette, ensuring the bold white around it is visible. You can view your layer mask in isolation if needs be by holding the Alt key on the keyboard and clicking the layer mask thumbnail. Alt-click the thumbnail again to return to normal view.



04 Fill up Hide this layer by toggling the eye icon in the Layers palette. Click back on the Background layer and add a new one (Ctrl/Cmd+Shift+N). Choose colour #b7a997 for the Foreground colour swatch and go to Edit>Fill, choosing Foreground Color for Contents. Click back on the image layer above and reveal it with the eye icon.



05 On the canvas Go to Layer>New Fill Layer>Pattern. In the Pattern Fill dialog, click on the pattern swatch and load the supplied file ('pp-canvas.pat') into Photoshop. Set the Scale of the pattern to 176% and the blend mode of the layer to Multiply.



BUILD UP THE SURFACE COMPLEXITY

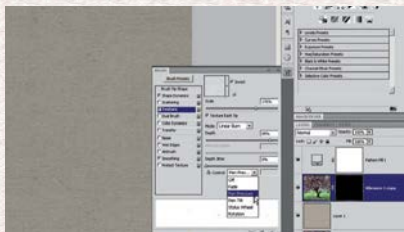
Use masks and layer styles for convincing texture

Tip

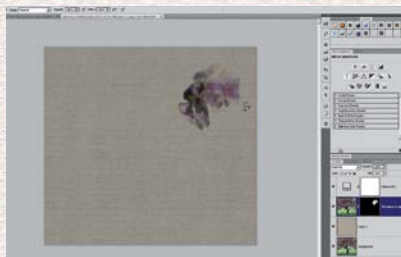


Impasto and colour

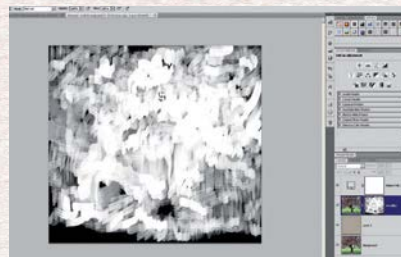
The main impasto layers have a Fill value of 0% leaving just the layer style visible. On a final layer, paint with both colour and impasto. Apply the impasto layer style, but set Fill to 100%. Add just a few touches of paint here and there with the Brush tool.



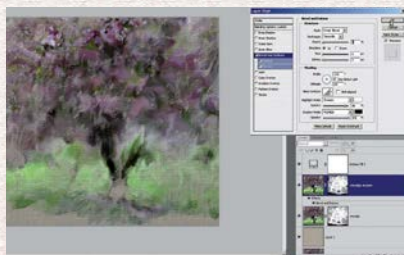
06 Mask and brush Return to the smudged layer and go to Layer>Layer Mask>Hide All. Choose the Brush tool and load the Thick Heavy brush set. Choose the Flat Bristle brush. In the Brushes palette (F5) click Texture. Choose the same pattern file and set it to the same Scale. Set the blend mode to Linear Burn and Depth to 89%. If you have a graphics tablet, set Control to Pen Pressure.



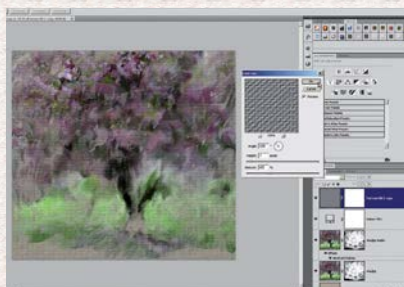
07 Paint on the mask Choose Other Dynamics (Transfer in CS5) and set Opacity Control to Pen Pressure. Click directly on the black-filled layer mask in the Layers palette and ensure that your Foreground colour is white. Now start to paint roughly onto the layer mask to reveal the associated image layer at varying degrees of opacity.



08 Hit and miss Make sure to vary the pressure you use as you paint with short strokes to change the intensity of the revealed colour. Use quite broad strokes within the tree and finer, more vertical strokes over the ground. It's important to create a hit-and-miss coverage here. You can see the layer mask in isolation in this screenshot.



09 The thick of it Duplicate this layer (Ctrl/Cmd+J). Go to Layer>Layer Style>Bevel and Emboss. Choose Inner Bevel and Smooth. Set Depth to 1 and Size and Soften to 0. For Angle enter 124, and Altitude 69. On the far left side of the Layer Style dialog check Contour. Click OK to apply the layer style then set the Fill of this layer to 0%.



10 Touchy feely Return to the Pattern Fill layer and duplicate it (Ctrl/Cmd+J). Right-click this layer and choose Rasterize Layer and then set the blend mode to Overlay. Now, to emboss this layer, go to Filter>Styleize>Emboss. Set Angle to 135, Height to 7 and Amount to 60. Click OK to apply the embossing effect.



Digital oil painting techniques

The crude basics for a painterly effect

Fluid effects The Smudge tool, used economically, creates very liquid, blended strokes, which do a great job of re-creating the dynamic effect of wet oil paint.

Create a focus The layer that's simplified, but still quite detailed, adds focus and intricacy to the important parts of the image where it's revealed via the layer mask.

Pressure point The contrast between the grainy canvas and the smooth colour on a layer above the texture really accentuates the natural media feel in this digital painting.

Underpainting The highly smudged layer, when revealed with layer masks, acts as a very loose underpainting, showing through here and there just as it would on a real oil painting.

Layer to success Painting on layer masks at varying degrees of opacity slowly builds up the complex contrast between the various layers of paint for a convincing, tactile feel.



THE MAGIC BEHIND THE MASK

The effectiveness of this painting comes from the fact that we're exposing parts of each layer using layer masks. This allows the complex, organic pattern of brushstrokes, colour and texture to be built up and then revealed in a subtle way.



Vital texture As you paint using just a little pressure on the brush, the mask reveals the colour below it at a low opacity, which barely conceals the underlying canvas.



Thicker paint Use lots of pressure to reveal the associated image layer at high opacity, giving the impression of thicker, bolder colour with less of the canvas texture visible.



Dab hand To create the hit-and-miss effect within the painting, make sure to use short, expressive dabs with the brush. Graphics tablets make this easier to achieve.



Build up colour Use your brush with just a little pressure and paint over the same area again and again to build up the colour gradually for yet another kind of painterly effect.

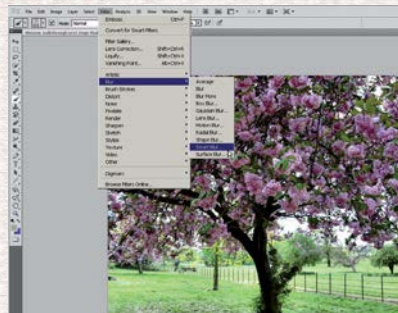


Hide and seek Just as you can reveal colour via the layer mask, you can hide it again by painting onto the mask with black selected from the Color Picker rather than white.

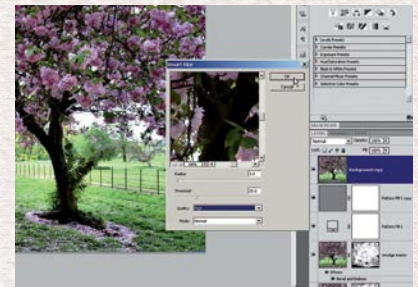


MAKE IT MORE PAINTERLY

Use a variety of techniques for detail and accents



11 Keep it simple Click on the original Background layer and duplicate it (Ctrl/Cmd-J). Drag this duplicated layer up to the top of the layer stack. We need to simplify the detail in this layer a little, so go to Filter>Blur>Smart Blur.



12 Less is more In the Smart Blur dialog, set Radius to 3.0 and Threshold to 25.0. Set the Quality to High and the Mode to Normal. This will reduce the amount of detail in this image layer. Now, once again, add a layer mask by going to Layer>Layer Mask>Hide All.



13 The big reveal Once again, using the same brush at a much smaller size, start to paint in short strokes onto this layer mask with white. Concentrate mainly over the foliage, blossom and branches on the tree. Go quite carefully, slowly building up detail by revealing flowers.



14 Make it painterly If you are using a graphics tablet, you need to vary the pressure you apply to the stylus to control how boldly the detailed layer is revealed. Don't worry about painting over individual areas completely, but use a painterly approach to create a patchwork of this detailed layer and the more indistinct layers beneath.



15 Scintillating strokes Use the same technique over the ground and the trunk of the tree. Lots of vertical and horizontal strokes work well on the ground, especially as this is a flat brush. Make sure to reveal the hard edges of the tree trunk a little to add some sharpness there. Once you're happy with the revealed detail, right-click the layer mask and choose Apply Layer Mask.

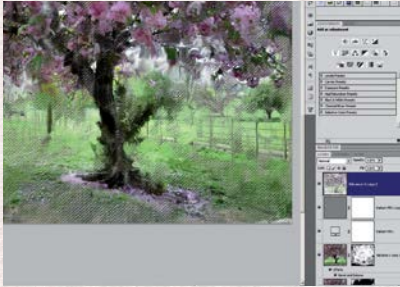


16 Subtle smudging Choose the Smudge tool and set the Strength to 100% for the next stage. Choose the same Flat Bristle brush from the Brush picker. Now, carefully use this tool with the brush set to a very small size to add some blended accents to the details. Zoom in and simply smudge here and there with short strokes to create a more painterly appearance.



ANOINT THE CANVAS

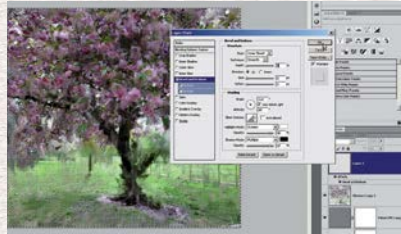
Finish off with the power of impasto



17 Breaking up Be careful at this stage of the process. Less is more. All you're doing is slightly confusing the areas of detail and breaking up a few of the hard edges here and there, giving more of an impression of painted strokes. You can also use this same technique on the lower image layer.



19 Pile it on Use the same brush you created originally to paint quite roughly over the entire scene, varying the direction of your brushstrokes. As you paint, you'll see the impasto effect begin to appear. If you can, vary the pressure on your stylus to vary the impasto depth.



18 Instant impasto Add a new layer (Ctrl/Cmd+Shift+N). Go to Layer>Layer Style>Bevel and Emboss. Refer to the 'Impressive impasto' boxout and set up the shallow impasto layer style. Make sure to set the Fill for this layer to 0% in the Layers palette. This will mean that you can paint with any colour and reveal just the impasto effect and not the colour on your brush.



20 **The feel of paint** Create another layer, setting up the heavier impasto layer style (see boxout). Now use the brushes at a smaller size to add dabs of impasto mainly over the lighter areas within the blossom and the foliage. By painting on multiple layers with the same layer style applied, you can build up the depth of the effect.



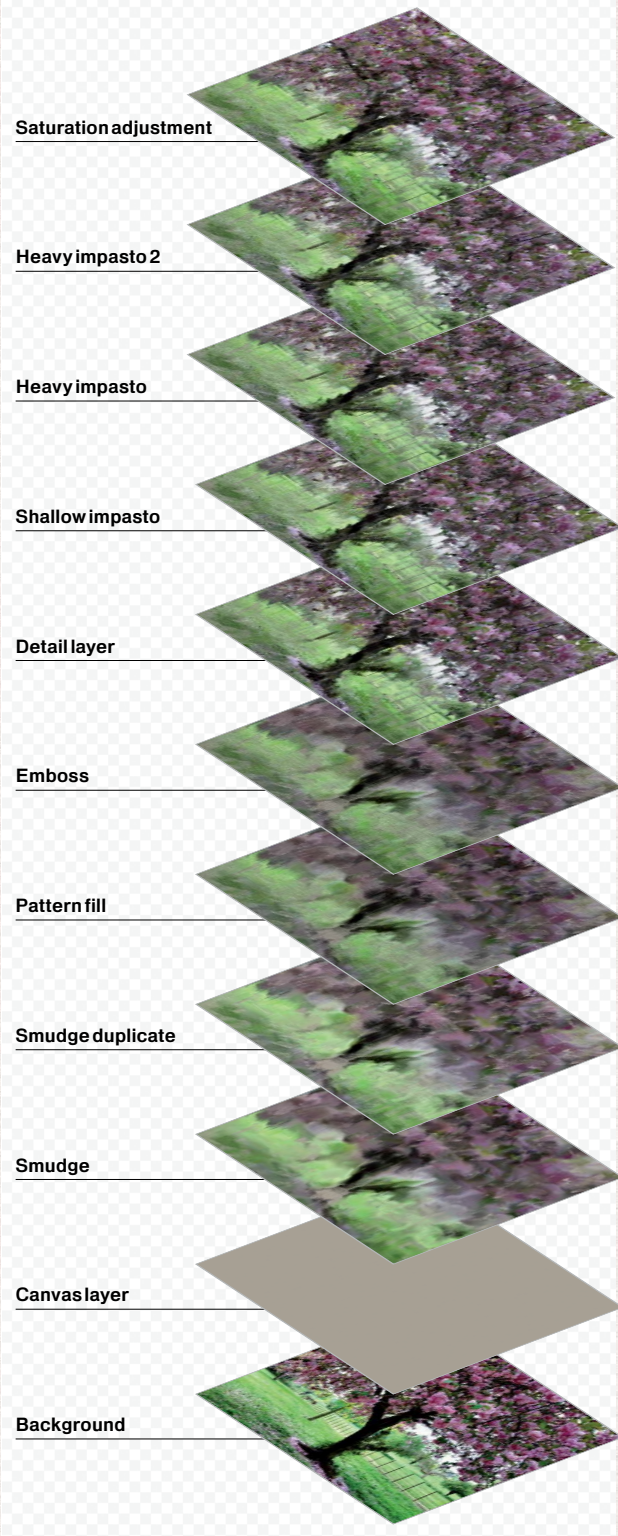
21 Build up the surface

It's worth taking your time with the final phase using short, descriptive strokes across the image, building up a complex patchwork of the various impasto looks. View your painting from a distance to gauge how apparent the effect is and to make sure you're happy with the result.



Layer structure

Build a slick image



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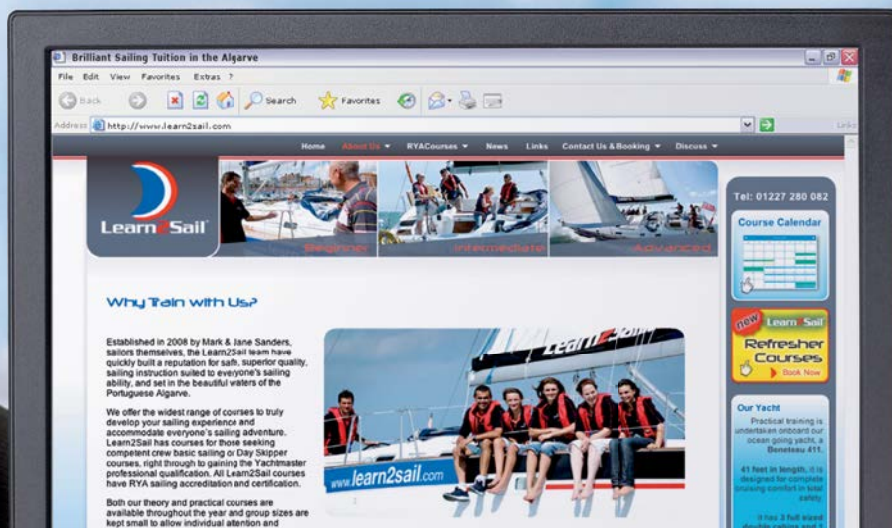
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TIME TAKEN

3 hours

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Simon Skellon

Get started with lighting effects

We take you through the steps for making your own lighting effects with neon stars and clouds



Photoshop and light effects go together like meat and gravy at dinner time. And

let's face it, successful digital art is based on the skill of balancing light and colour, with focus also playing a major part. All of this can be achieved with the help of Photoshop and its range of tools, adjustments and filters, blended perfectly together to make a polished composition.

Here, we explore the art of light, using neon glows with a backdrop coloured by

clouds and shining streaks. By layering and blurring white lines made with the Pen tool, you can create an opening in your canvas that looks like light is seeping through and splitting up. Combine these streaks of light with a blend mode and a layer style, and the effect will soon be dazzling.

Learn about applying Smart Objects and how they have been used to make this tutorial easier to manage. Find out how to make the cloudy atmosphere, and which layer styles came in handy for forming the

bright edges of our starry shapes. In the final composition, stars are used in the background and foreground, but you may decide to leave out the larger ones or even incorporate a different shape altogether.

This image could also be applied as a background for another composition, using the cloudy, colourful canvas as a spooky night's sky, for example.

There are no start images for this one so follow these steps for the basics, and then it's all down to your imagination!

KEY SKILLS COVERED

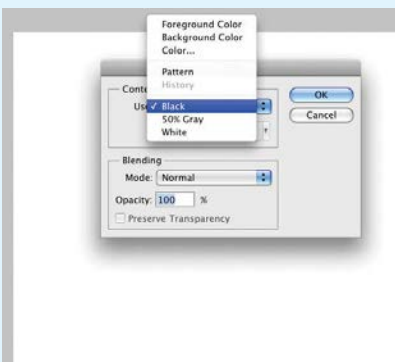
What you'll learn

CUSTOM SHAPES
FILTERS
BLEND MODES
LAYER STYLES
SMART OBJECTS
ADJUSTMENT LAYERS

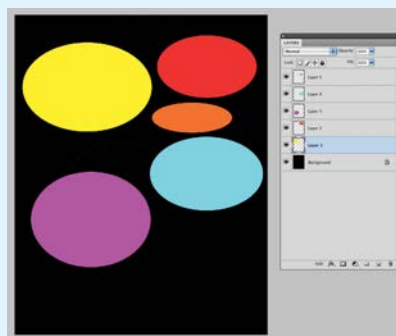


A SIMPLE YET EFFECTIVE BACKGROUND

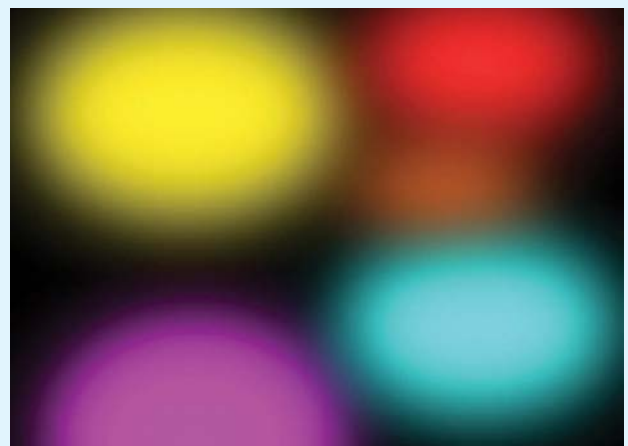
Use basic, coloured shapes to begin the image



01 Into the dark Create a new document with roughly A4 dimensions and go to Edit>Fill (Shift+F5). In the Fill dialog box change the Contents to Black, Opacity to 100% and Mode to Normal. Hit OK and the entire canvas will be filled with black.



02 Background colours Create a new layer and pick the Elliptical Marquee tool. Set Feather to 0px and draw an oval in the top left quarter of the canvas. Go to Edit>Fill and choose a bright yellow. Continue creating ovals on separate layers, filling each with a new, vibrant colour as you go.



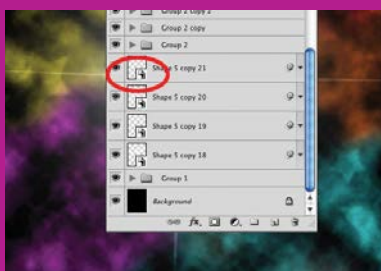
03 Blur colours For each colour oval, go to Filter>Blur>Gaussian Blur and apply a blur of 100px. This will spread the colours out, as well as softening the edges for a diffused effect.



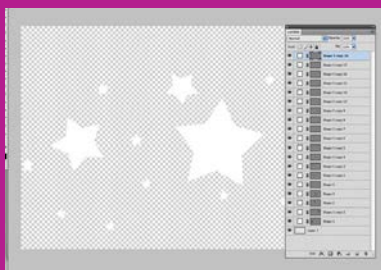
WORKS WITH | PHOTOSHOP CS2 AND ABOVE

WORK WITH SMART OBJECTS

For the faint star shapes in the background, we've gone for the Smart Object approach. A Smart Object can keep your Layers palette looking tidy and your editable files safe.



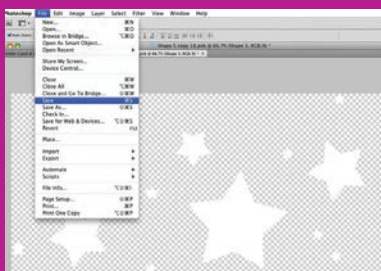
What's in a Smart Object? When more than one layer has been made into a Smart Object, they are hidden. To edit this document, double-click on the small icon.



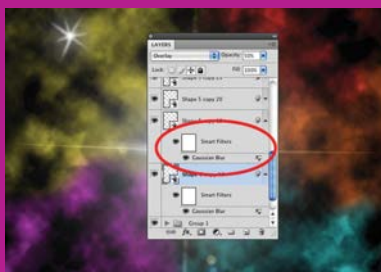
Editing Smart Objects When you double-click on a Smart Object's icon, a new document will open containing the original layers. Edit using a fresh History palette.



Making changes Editing the stars in this image is now easier than on the original canvas. You can resize, rotate and position each of the stars inside the document.



Saving a Smart Object Once all the edits have been made, simply hit Save, and close the document. Back in the original image, the layers will be updated with the changes.

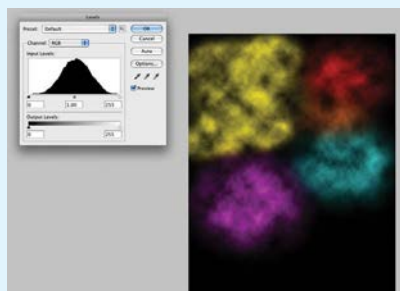


Smart filters A smart filter attaches itself to a Smart Object and allows you to make changes to the settings. Useful if you're constantly changing the look of your image.

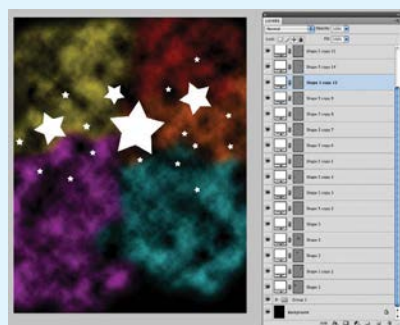


SEEING STARS

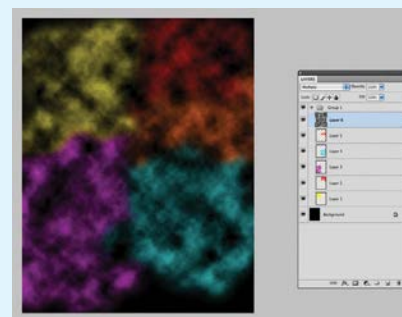
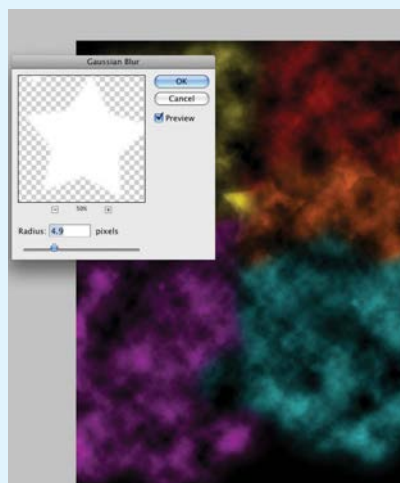
Put the Custom Shape tool to good use



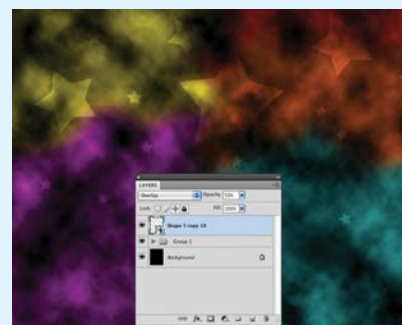
04 Add clouds Hit D to set Foreground colour to black and Background colour to white. Create a new layer and go to Filter>Render>Clouds then change its blend mode to Multiply. Boost the Levels at Image>Adjustments>Levels and place all of the layers so far together in a group.



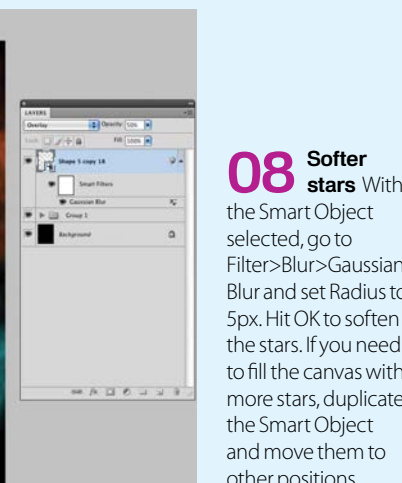
06 Add star shapes Pick the Custom Shape tool, select the 5 Point Star shape and ensure Shape Layers is selected in the Options bar. Draw white stars on your canvas, varying the sizes from tiny to large. Rotate them at different angles (Ctrl/Cmd+T).



05 Fill in colour If there are spaces between each colour, use the Brush tool to paint in the gaps. Pick the original colours from their layers with the Eyedropper by hiding the Clouds layer. When complete, lower the Opacity of the group to 70%.



07 New Smart Object Select all the shape layers (Shift-click from the top to bottom layer) and go to Layer>Smart Objects>Convert to Smart Object. Change the blend mode of the Smart Object to Overlay and lower its Opacity to 50%.

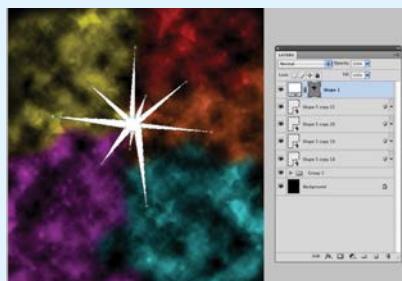


08 Softer stars With the Smart Object selected, go to Filter>Blur>Gaussian Blur and set Radius to 5px. Hit OK to soften the stars. If you need to fill the canvas with more stars, duplicate the Smart Object and move them to other positions.

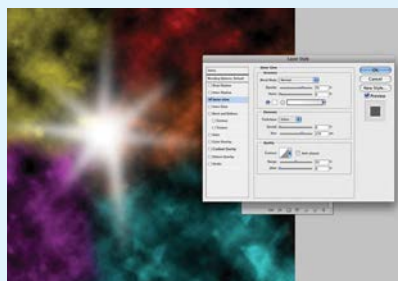


THE KEY TO ARTIFICIAL LIGHT

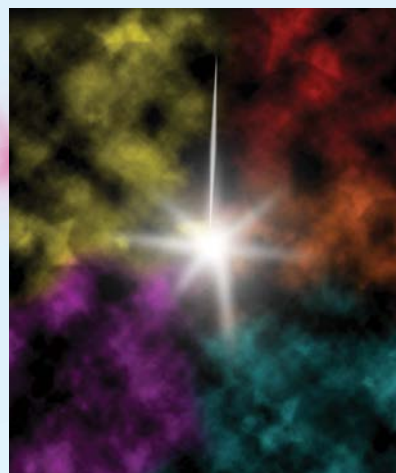
Blur white light and add streaks to boost impact



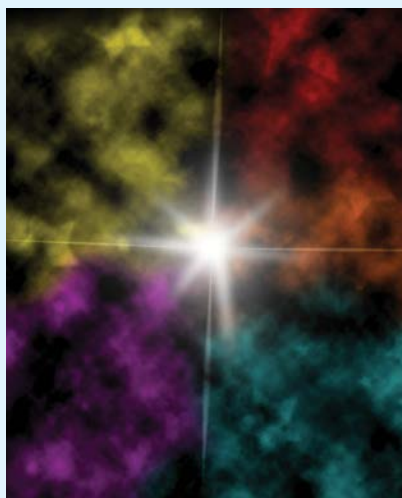
09 A touch of glare Create a new layer and use the Pen tool to draw a white spiky star in the middle of your canvas. Make sure Shape Layers is highlighted in the Options bar to fill the shape automatically. When you're done, Ctrl/right-click the layer and select Rasterize Layer.



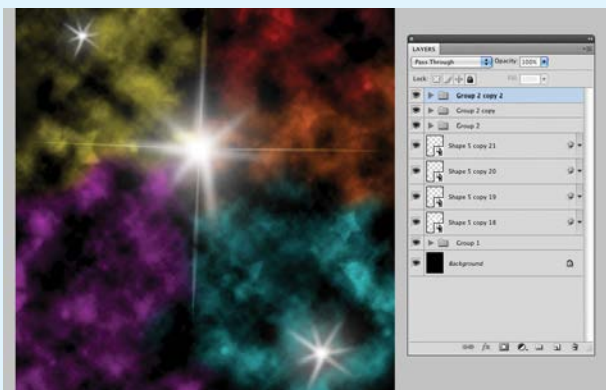
10 Turn shape into glow Add a Gaussian Blur to this shape, setting its Radius to 24px. Hit OK and double-click its layer. In the Layer Style menu, add a white Outer Glow with Opacity set to 70% and Size to 170px. Hit OK and duplicate the layer. Apply a Gaussian Blur set to maximum (250px) for the duplicate.



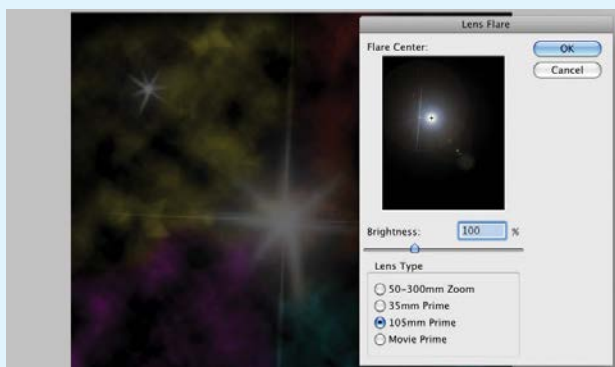
11 Streaks of light For the streaks of light, create a new layer and use the Pen tool, set to white with Paths selected in the Options bar, to draw a Path from the centre of the glow outwards. Ctrl/right-click over the Path and select Stroke Path. Tick Simulate Pressure, choose Brush in the pop-up menu and hit OK.



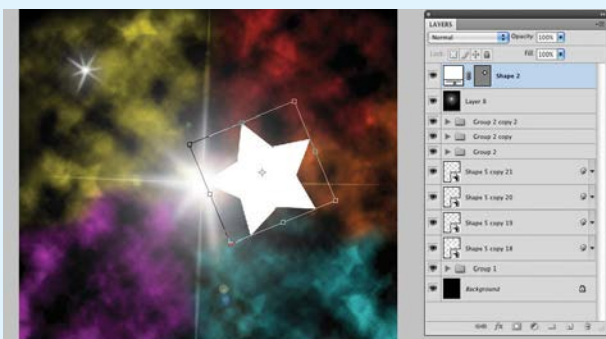
12 Duplicate lines Duplicate the line three times and position each one at right angles outwards from the glow. Change their blend modes to Soft Light and use Edit>Free Transform to enlarge and widen each streak of light across your canvas.



13 Double up Move the streaks and the glow into a new group on the Layers palette. Duplicate this group and delete the streaks, leaving just the glowing centre. Move the glow to another location and make it slightly smaller for the next one.



14 Add some flare Create a new layer and Edit>Fill with black. Lower the layer's Opacity to 60% and go to Filter>Render>Lens Flare. Set Lens Type to 105mm Prime, Brightness to 100% and position the flare over your glow. Hit OK, then change the blend mode to Screen.



15 Star formations For the larger stars in the foreground, create a new layer and select the Custom Shape tool (U). Choose the shape 5 Point Star (as before) and apply a large star as a focal point for your image. Use Ctrl/Cmd+T to rotate the shape so that one of the points is over the middle of your largest glow.

Tip



Masking the streaks

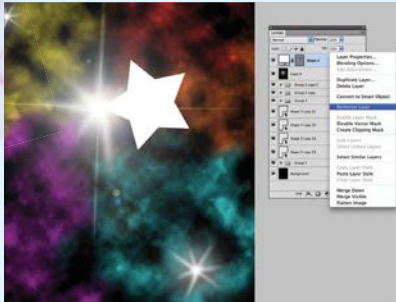
Where the streaks of light overlap some of the star shapes, you can bring the star to the foreground using a layer mask. Hunt down the light streaks in the Layers palette and add a layer mask. Use the Brush tool set to black and paint over the parts of the stars where a light streak is covering their shape. Editing the mask allows you to bring back the streak if you decide to move or reshape the star later on.



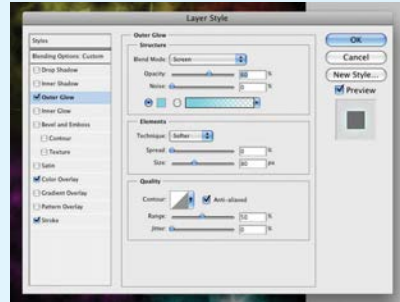


ADD SOME DAY-GLO DAZZLE

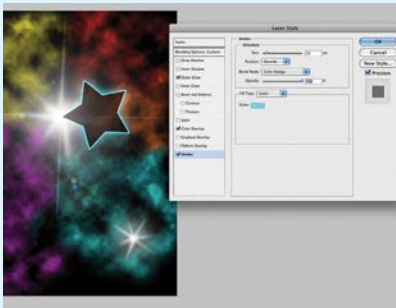
Create contrasting light for a neon effect



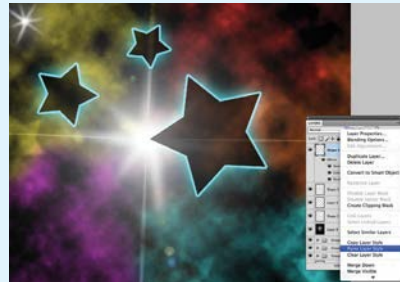
16 Invisible stars When the star is in position, Ctrl/right-click over its layer and choose Rasterize Layer from the list of options. Reduce the Fill to 0% in the Layers palette and the star should disappear. But don't worry, it's not for long...



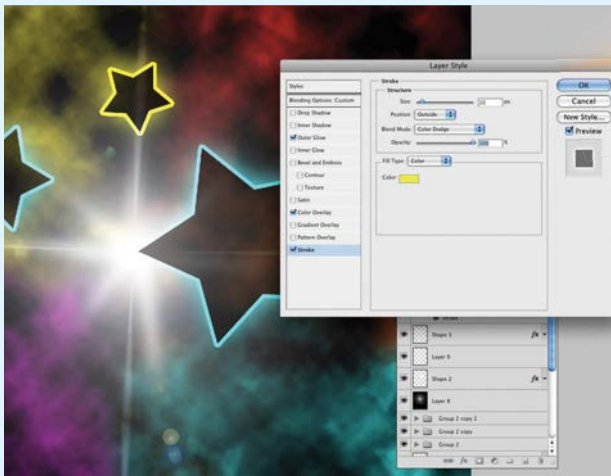
17 Add layer style Double-click on the star's layer to open the Layer Style menu. Add the Outer Glow option and choose a bright cyan, or other neon colour. Set its Mode to Screen, the Opacity to 60%, Spread to 0% and Size to 80px.



18 Color Overlay Add the Color Overlay option and set it to black with a Normal blend mode. Make its Opacity 50%. Now add a Stroke with a Size of 10px, Position as Center, blend mode Color Dodge, 100% Opacity and with the same neon-appropriate colour as your Outer Glow.



19 Multiplicity Now you have the layer style ready to go, create more stars on the canvas giving each its own layer. Vary sizes and rotations, reducing the Fill to 0% for each shape. Ctrl/right-click on the first star made and select Copy Layer Style. For each star shape, Ctrl/right-click on the layers and select Paste Layer Style to replicate it.



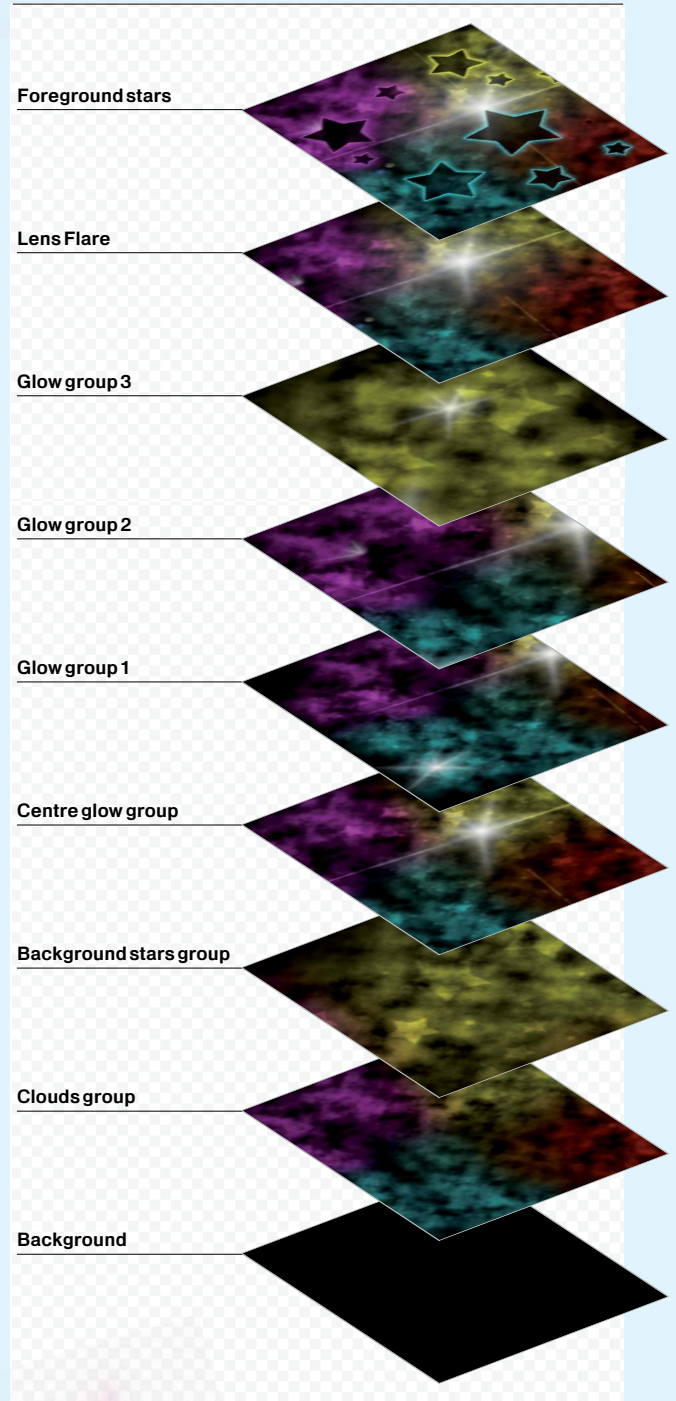
20 Change colours

Finally, change the colours of the Outer Glow and the Stroke Style of the other stars to match the background. By changing the Opacity of the Stroke Style, the Clouds filter beneath can show through.



Layer structure

Light-hearted fun



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Understanding actions

ON THE DISC

Photo
Retouches.atn
Country
cottage.jpg

Tip



Button mode

Inside the Actions palette (in the drop-down menu) is the Button Mode option. Turning this on reveals your Actions as buttons which play the set command instantly so you don't have to search for actions and select them.

Get to grips with Photoshop's technical side and learn how this great feature allows you to apply effects over and over



Improving Photoshop's rate of fire, an action is the perfect solution for a busy workflow and takes the hassle out of repeating effects and techniques.

Actions are used to save your favourite effects so you don't need to remember the settings used each time. Actions are addictive, and while you may have used the odd preset action now and then, the addiction only truly begins when you create your own.

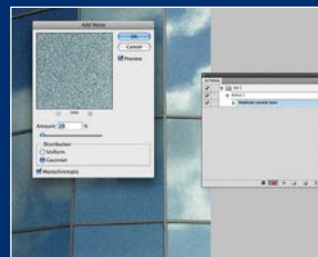
Here we've explored the Actions palette and how you can make the most out of using this feature, as well as giving you a step-by-step on how to create your own action from scratch. A new action can be made to do anything, whether that's changing image resolution, saving your artwork as a certain file type or applying a blend mode or layer style. Techniques and adjustments can even be applied all at once to completely overhaul an image in your ultimate action.

Actions exist to make time-consuming tasks faster. For example, if you were looking to create a copyright symbol for applying to a collection of images. As the potential for repetition is high, you should consider using an action to save the steps you take the first time round. After then, it's a case of hitting Play to simply repeat those exact same steps for another image with no extra effort. If you turn to page 64, you'll find out how actions are used in the Batch command.

Editing a custom action

Stopping and starting with ease

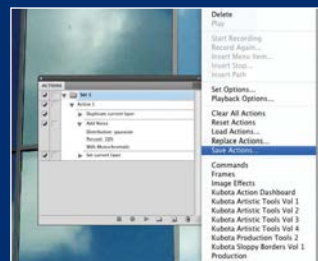
So you've created your action but it didn't turn out how you expected it to and you're not happy with the result. Thankfully, you can edit an action and then record from the last command stored to make sure it's perfect every time.



01 A film grain effect For an action that gives a cool, film grain look to your image, hit record then duplicate the main layer and apply the Add Noise filter with Amount 20%. Change the duplicated layer's blend mode to Soft Light.



02 Make action adjustments The Add Noise filter may look too harsh, in which case delete the duplicated layer. You can then edit the level of noise by double-clicking on the command in the Actions palette. Adjust the Amount to 10%.

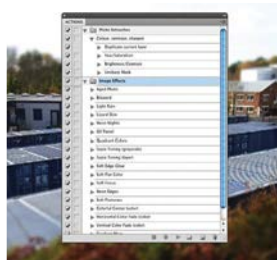


03 Test the adjustment Go back to the top of the action and hit Play to test out the results. Click on the action's folder to activate the Save Action option in the palette's drop-down menu. Store the effect on your computer for later use.

The Actions palette

The command centre for actions

Actions have their own palette, to record, play and manage commands. The palette lists all your current commands for quick access and each step in a command is visible and editable. Using the drop-down menu at the top of the palette, you can pick from a number of presets. Actions are grouped into sets and have the quality of being editable at any point, meaning any problems with a command can be fixed and replayed. Once an action is set up, you can apply it as many times as you like. They are shortcuts that save you many minutes otherwise spent clicking through menus.



Using presets

A few examples of what can be done

To kick things off, the Actions palette comes loaded with artistic presets to try on your artwork. They're categorised into sets, which include Production, Image Effects, Frames and Text Effects. Simply select one of these and the commands will load into the Actions palette ready for you to use. All that's needed is to hit the Play button at the base of the palette and watch the action take place. Some actions require you to make changes to the adjustment specific to your image. These stop commands can be removed by toggling the small icon next to the command in the Actions palette.

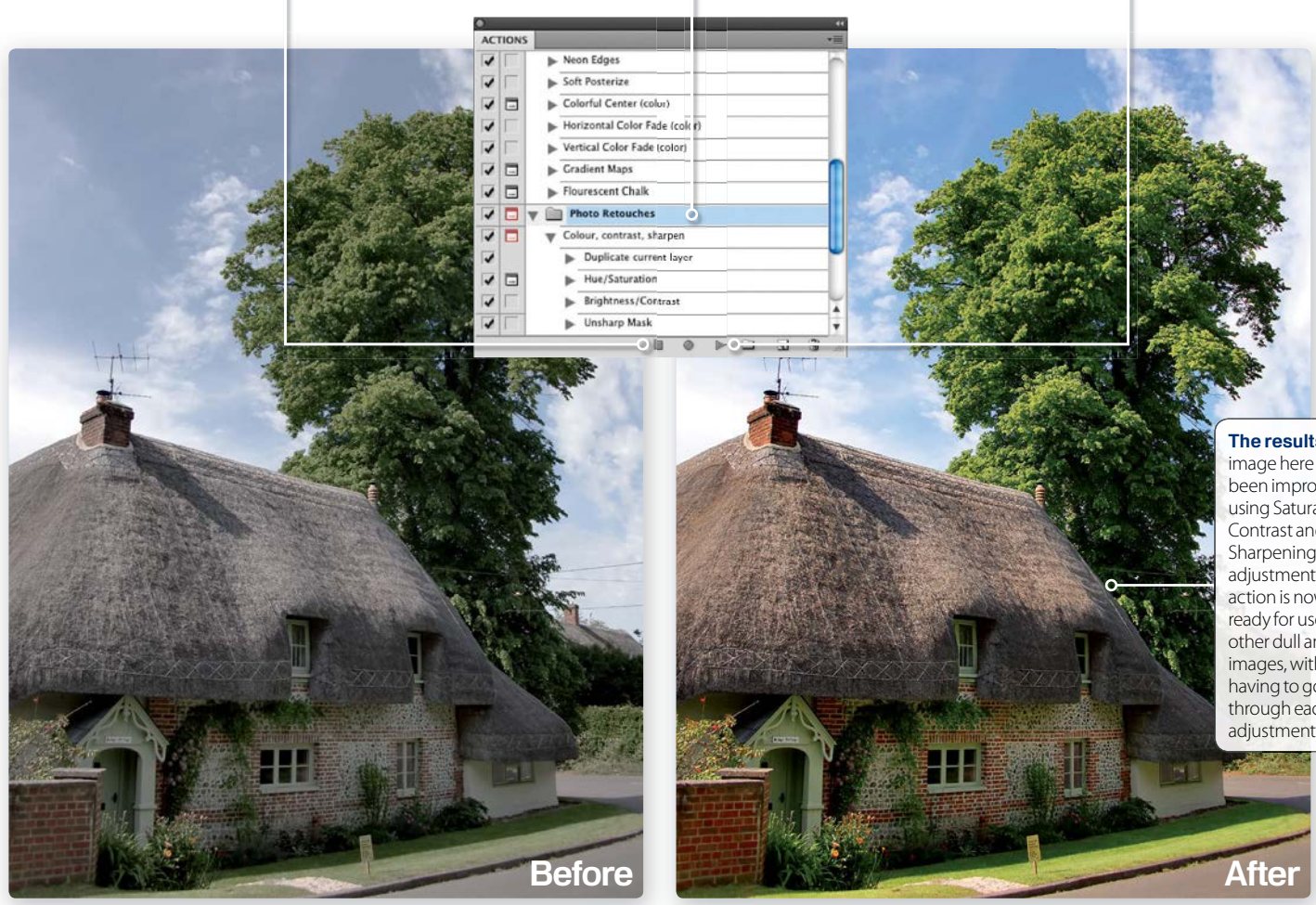




The palette Actions are controlled from within the palette with the Play, Record, Stop and New Action buttons at its base. Actions are listed in the order they'll play, which can also be edited at any point.

Recording your own Hit the Record button to begin your own action. Every click of the mouse is stored inside the palette, but can be deleted and re-recorded at any point.

Controlling actions You can decide how an action responds at each command, whether you want to stop at a particular point or make an adjustment specific to an image. The speed of an action can be altered too for more control over what's going on.



The results The image here has been improved using Saturation, Contrast and Sharpening adjustments. The action is now ready for use on other dull and flat images, without having to go through each adjustment.



Organising actions

Loading and staying on top of your actions

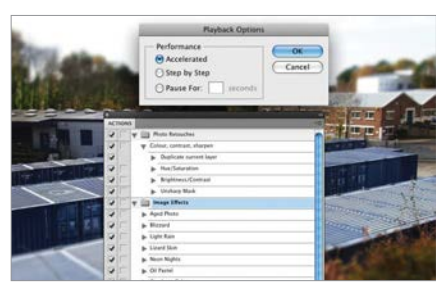
New actions can be loaded into the palette using the drop-down menu by clicking on Load Actions. These could either be ones downloaded from the web or actions of your own that you have saved onto the computer. Once loaded into the palette, actions can be moved around in an order that best suits your workflow. They can be reset, renamed, duplicated or even replaced, and this adaptable nature gives you lots of room to play around and organise the palette's layout. The key to a great Actions palette is naming and grouping them together for speed and efficiency.



Playback options

Adjusting the speed of an action

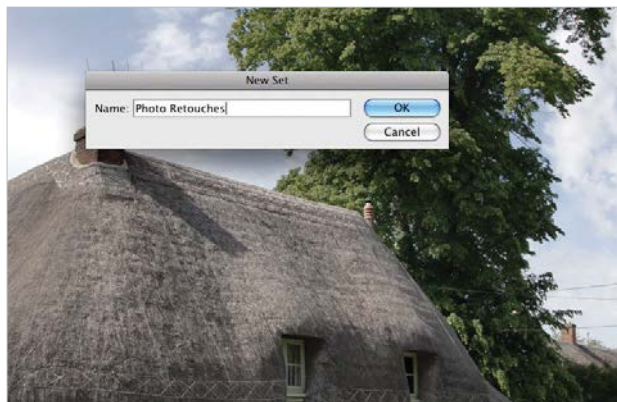
The Actions palette has three options for changing the speed of an action. These are; Accelerated, where the Action will run through an entire command without stopping or showing the effects as they happen; Step by Step, which makes sure each command in the action is finished before it moves to the next one; and Pause For, where you can set the time in seconds between each command. Adjusting the speed of an action will make sure steps perform correctly.



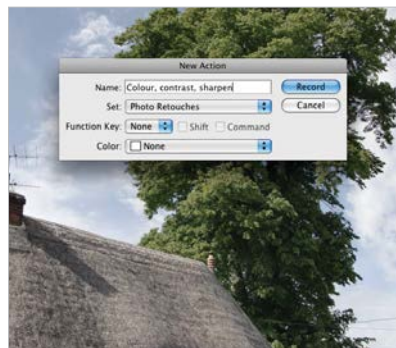


SET UP THE ACTION TO BOOST COLOUR, CONTRAST AND SHARPNESS

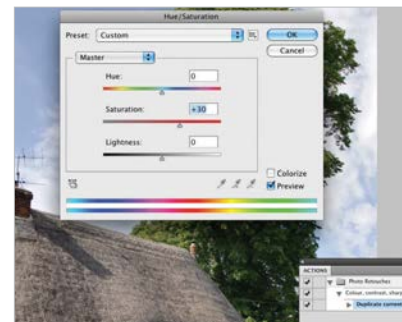
How a lengthy process can be reduced to just seconds for retouching photos



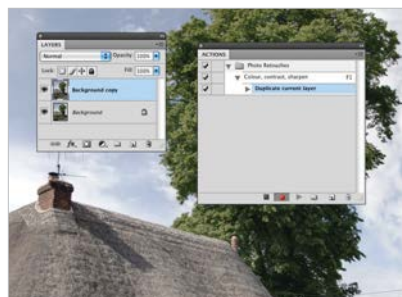
01 Create a new action Open the file 'country cottage.jpg' from your disc, or any other underexposed photo. Next, open up the Actions palette (Window>Actions) and click on the Create New Set button. Name the set Photo Retouches.



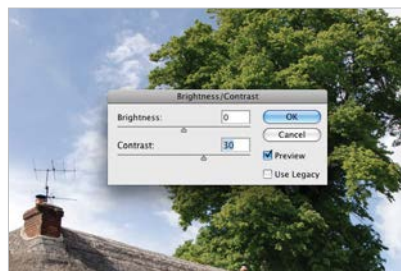
02 Name the action Click on the Create New Action button in the Actions palette. In the pop-up box, name this action Colour, Contrast, Sharpen. Under the Function Key, set to None and then hit Record to begin creating your action.



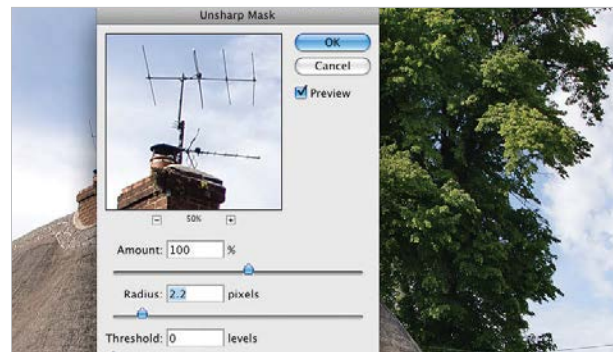
03 We're rolling! The red Record button should be highlighted in the palette, which means the action is recording our every click. The first command is to drag the Background layer onto the Create New button in the Layers palette to duplicate, then this will be how the action always starts.



04 Boost colours To enhance the saturation of the image, go to Image>Adjustments>Hue/Saturation, and move the Saturation slider to +30. Hit OK, and the command should record and show up in your Actions palette.



05 Improve contrast For the next command in the action, go to Image>Adjustments>Brightness/Contrast, and increase Contrast to +30. This should bring more life to highlights and shadows. If you make a mistake, simply stop the action, delete the command, and record again.



06 Improve sharpness To boost the sharpness of the image, go to Filter>Sharpen>Unsharp Mask. Enter 100% for Amount, 2.2px for Radius and set Threshold to 0. Hit OK to apply the sharpening, and hit Stop in the palette to complete the action.



Automate actions

More auto-pilot commands

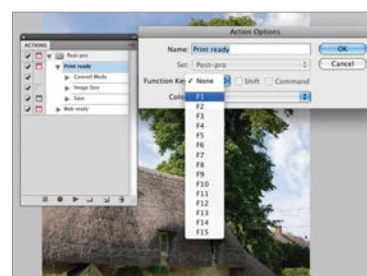
Actions are an integral part of Photoshop's Automate commands (found under File>Automate). Using actions will speed up processes that would otherwise take many editing hours. The Batch command can be set up using a custom or preset action assigned to it, and is a fast way to edit a folder of images in one go. To set one up, go to the Batch menu and select the desired action under Play. Select the folder you want to use and choose the destination, whether that's a specific folder or simply to stay open in Photoshop once the action has been applied. Check the final steps in this article to find out how to apply a droplet.



Action shortcuts

A quicker way to apply actions

Actions are time-savers of postproduction, but you can speed up their already fast reactions using shortcuts officially known as Function Keys. Function Keys use F1-F15, and allow you to apply an action at the press of a button. There are two ways to set up a Function Key. The first is to choose one when you create a new action. In the New Action window simply select the desired key. The second method is to apply a function after an action is made, using the Action Options menu (from inside the Actions palette).

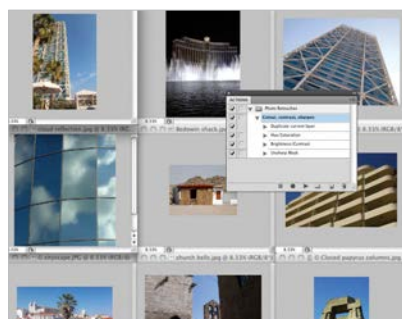


Tip

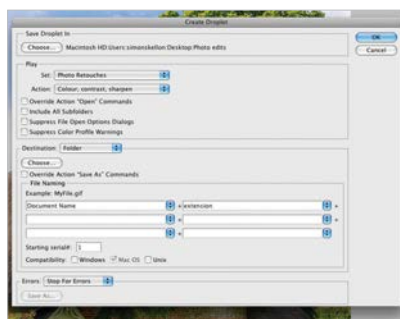


Stop commands

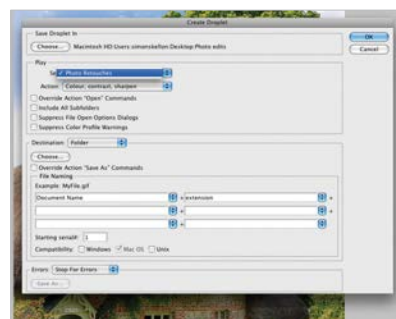
For every action there is the option to apply a stop command. This will halt an action in its tracks so you can make adjustments specific to an image. One action on an image may not work the same on another, and stop commands allow you to make changes at any point. The action will stop and then resume when you hit OK in the Adjustments menu.



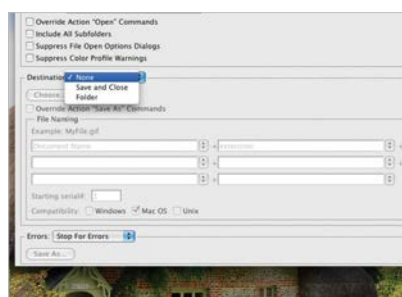
07 Test and improve Try the action on a range of images to see the results. Pressing Play will run the commands instantly and you can adjust any settings by double-clicking on the command, which opens the adjustment for you to alter.



08 Create a droplet Go to File>Automate>Create Droplet, and under Choose, select your computer's desktop to save the droplet on. Once the droplet is created, it lets you drag images onto its icon to apply the action.



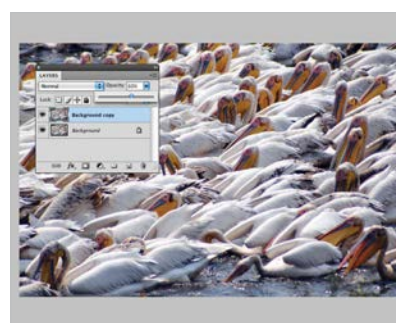
09 Set up commands In the Droplet menu, under Play, change Set to the action you just made – Photo Retouches. The Action area should show Colour, Contrast, Sharpen, and make sure the four boxes underneath Play are all unchecked.



10 Change destination Under Destination, change its setting to None as we want to keep the images open after applying the action. This will hide the remaining options under File Naming. Keep Errors set to Stop for Errors then hit OK to complete your droplet.



11 Locate the droplet A new droplet icon should now be on your desktop screen as a blue arrow. To use the action applied to the droplet, highlight a bunch of images then drag and drop them onto the icon to load in Photoshop.



12 Changing opacities Go through your images in Photoshop and they should have the adjustments applied onto a duplicate layer. If the adjustment is too strong on an image, lower the opacity of the top layer in the Layers palette.

Action resources

Download free actions

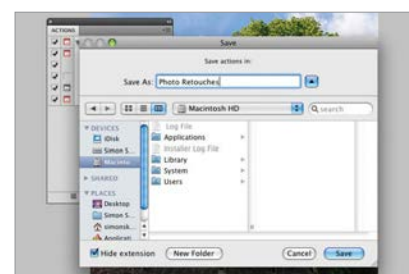
There are many resources online for downloading free actions to try out on your artwork. Websites such as www.visual-blast.com, www.hongkiat.com and <http://designreviver.com> offer various effects as actions, all ready to launch into Photoshop. Once they've been downloaded, go into the Action palette's drop-down menu and click on the Load Actions button. Sourced from all over the web, these sites have many different actions for experimenting with to load your palette to the brim with interesting effects. It's a case of filing them away to use at the right moment.



Exchange actions

Get feedback on your custom actions

Why not create actions to share with fellow artists? Save your favourite actions onto your computer via the Actions palette, and then let fellow artists try them out on their images to see what they think. If you have your own website or blog, upload them and allow other users to download and try them out. It's one of the best ways to learn Photoshop inside and out, and you'll be able to speed up your workflow by becoming a master of actions.





essentials

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ON THE DISC

Bubble background.psd
Bubble source.psd

Bubble writing

Create soap bubble letters that look so real you'll want to reach out and pop them



he child inside all of us still thrills at the simply joy and excitement of bubbles. They float effortlessly through the air, swirling with a rainbow of colours and shimmering in the sun. They hearken back to

days free of care and worry, days full of innocence and wonder. Well, thanks to Photoshop, we can recapture this magic by creating soapy, shimmering, fun-filled bubble text.

This quick tutorial will demonstrate the techniques for creating realistic bubbles by using a combination of filters, layer styles and blending modes. You will be amazed at how easy it is to get a great bubble appearance by combining the Lens Flare filter with the Polar

Coordinates filter. The bright swirling colours can be simulated in a few clever steps with the Clouds filter along with some easy Liquify work. But the key to this technique is the creative use of blend modes, so we'll show you how they can be stacked by assigning one to the layer and another to that layer's group; an effect you're bound to find useful in numerous other ways too.

The majority of this instruction will be to set up the technique to form a single round bubble. Once you have that down, it's not a difficult matter to transfer the process to the shaped letters or more bubbles. Ultimately, this tutorial is about the creation technique of the bubble style, not an exact reproduction of our artwork.

WORKS WITH | PHOTOSHOP CS3 AND ABOVE



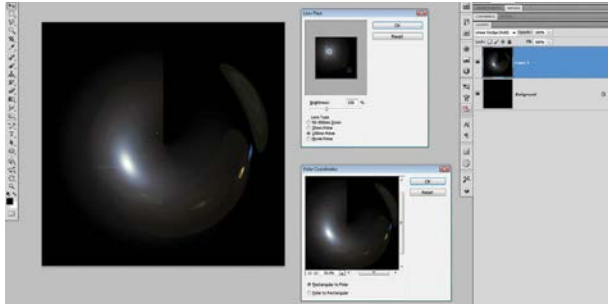
FLARES AND SWIRLS TO MAKE YOUR HEAD FLOAT

Learn how to capture the essential bubbly elements

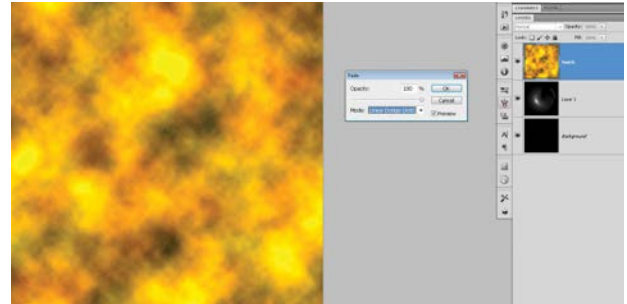
KEY SKILLS COVERED

What you'll learn

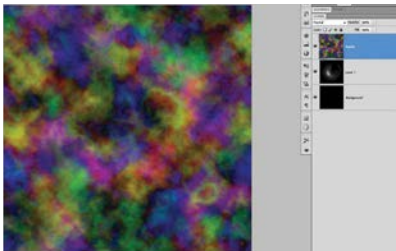
POLAR COORDINATES FILTER
LIQUIFY
BLENDING MODES
LAYERSTYLES



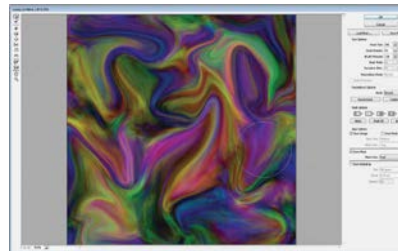
01 Bubble highlights Begin with a new document at 1,000px by 1,000px. Fill the Background with black and copy it to a new layer. Go to Filter>Render>Lens Flare and position the flare in the top third of the document. Go to Filter>Distort>Polar Coordinates and use the Rectangular to Polar setting. Change the blend mode to Linear Dodge.



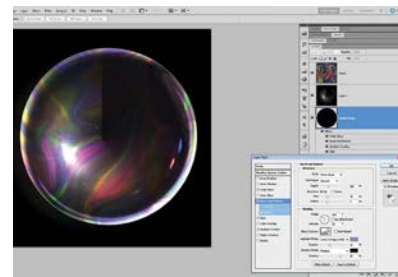
02 Colourful clouds Create a new layer named Swirls, set the Foreground colour to a bright hue and the Background to black. Go to Filter>Render>Clouds. Change the Foreground colour and run the Clouds filter again. Then go to Edit>Fade Clouds and change the Mode to Linear Dodge (Add).



03 Crazy, colourful clouds Continue changing the Foreground colour, running the Clouds filter and using the Fade command for different blend modes until you have a canvas filled with multi-coloured clouds. To add even more variation, use the Difference Clouds filter, continuing to change up the Foreground colours.



04 Liquify fun Go to Filter>Liquify and use the Forward Warp, Twirl and Turbulence tools with a large brush to create fluid swirls and waves of colour. The idea is to simulate the way light dances on the swirling soap of the bubble, so experiment. After applying the Liquify filter, change the layer's blend mode to Color Dodge.



05 Bubble style Create a new layer named Bubble Shape underneath the lens flare's layer. Fill a circular selection with black to form the base bubble shape. Assign layer styles using the method outlined in the Tip box and change the blending mode to Linear Dodge.

Tip



Re-create the bubble layer style

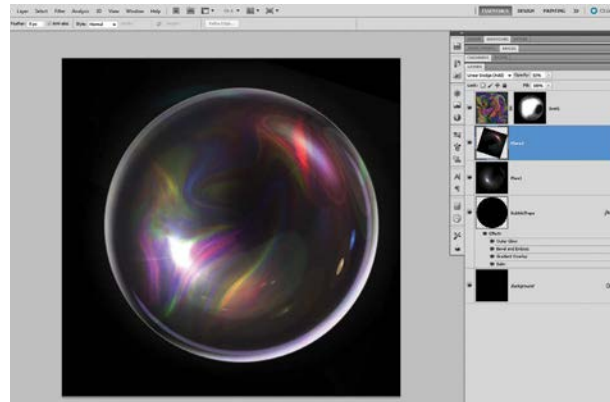
Outer Glow: Opacity set at 60%, white colour, Spread to 3%, Size 5 pixels

Bevel and Emboss: Depth 286%, Size 49 pixels, Soften 4 pixels, Shading Angle 124, Altitude 32, Gloss Contour at Rolling Slope-Decending, Highlight mode of Linear Dodge at 35% Opacity. Contour of Cove-Deep and Range 30%

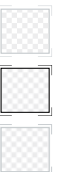
Satin: Blend mode set to Screen, Colour white, Opacity 70%, Angle 139, Distance 25 pixels, size 49, and Invert unchecked.



06 Work the mask Ctrl/Cmd-click the Bubble Shape layer to create a selection and then go to the layer with the colourful swirls. Add a layer mask to constrain the swirls to the round bubble shape. Use a soft black brush on the mask to fade the swirls away from the edges and control where they are most visible.



07 More flares Create another black-filled layer and use the technique from step 1 to create another flare highlight. Use a different flare setting and position it to get a highlight that is not just a duplicate of the first. Rotate this layer to position the highlight opposite the first and reduce the layer's Opacity to around 50%.



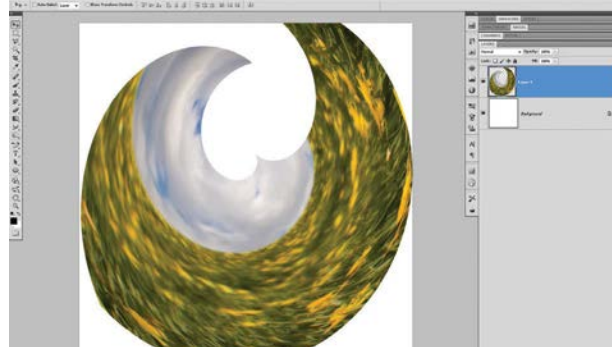


HERE A BUBBLE, THERE A BUBBLE, EVERYWHERE A BUBBLE!

Apply the same technique to any shape, even letters



08 Add a scene Group the four layers together that comprise the bubble and set the group's blending mode to Screen. Drag and drop the entire group onto the background scene, found on our CD. Create a large square selection of the background and go to Edit>Copy.



09 Twisted landscape Hit Ctrl/Cmd+N for a new document. Photoshop automatically sizes the file to the copied area. Go to Edit>Paste to place the copied area. Rotate the layer by 45 degrees and run the Polar Coordinates filter again to twist up the piece of background. This will be used as a reflection on the bubble.



10 Reflection goodness Drag the twisted landscape layer back onto the project file and place it in the bubble group below the swirls. Transform the layer to line up with the bubble shape. Set the blend mode to Vivid Light and reduce the Opacity to 40%. Use a layer mask to remove the reflection from the edges of the bubble.



11 Bubbly text Choose a rounded font (we picked Berlin Sans FB Demi) and create the text with each letter on its own layer. For each individual letter go to Layer>Type>Convert to Shape. Next, use the Direct Selection tool to carefully manipulate the points to make the letter shapes even more blobby and bubble like. Keep going until you are happy with the effect.



12 Bubble up! Using the letter layers for the shape, repeat the steps for creating the bubble effect. Save time by copying the flare, swirl and reflection layers from the original. Use the Warp transformation to make the layers fit the letters, use the letter shapes as selections to create masks and transform each group into place.



13 Complete the scene The group for the round bubble can be copied and the copied group can then be merged for easy duplicates to fill the scene (just remember to set the blend mode to Screen). Finish by creating a back colour layer and using a soft black brush with low opacity to gently paint behind the bubbles to show more depth and reveal the bubble's details.



Layer structure

Build your bubbles

Bubble writing

Bubble swirls

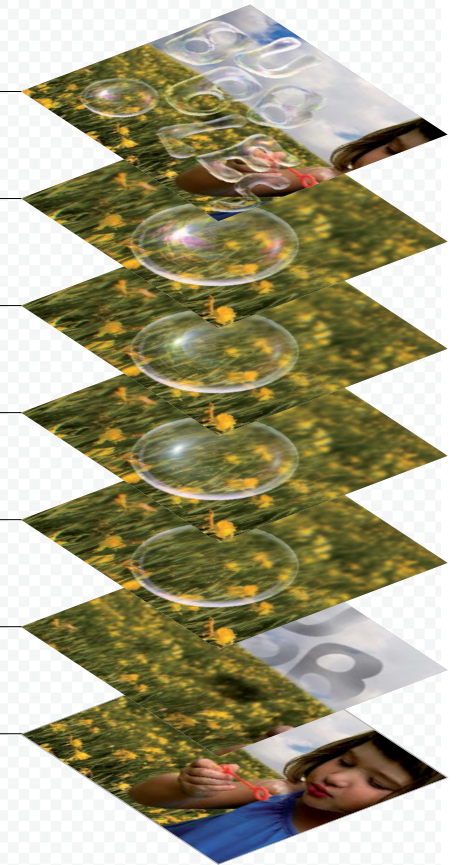
Bubble reflection

Bubble flare

Bubble shape

Back colour

Background





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Rediscover Photoshop's 3D Transform tool and create a stand-out image without the need for specialist software or complicated techniques



you may not know this, but you don't need expensive 3D modelling software to make an image that really stands

out; you don't even need Photoshop CS4 or 5. Way back in Photoshop 7 there was a filter called 3D Transform that was actually capable of basic 3D work. From Photoshop CS onwards, Adobe decided not to include 3D Transform, but you can still download it from <http://tinyurl.com/62sh8bo> and install it as a plug-in. The 3D Transform filter may seem basic compared

to professional 3D software (and even the 3D tools in CS4 and 5), but you can create some really effective images.

This tutorial teaches you how to make alphabet blocks using the 3D Transform tool. We'll cover applying a wood texture and using the Warp tool to make the wood grain fit the blocks, as well as using the Magic Wand and Gradient tools for shading on a Color Burn adjustment layer. After that, we'll show you how to make your own intricate and versatile custom shapes. These can be a great help for

many projects whether you work with photomanipulation or digital painting.

To aid us in this we'll make a second PSD file specifically for the ornate borders and use both Guides and Photoshop's Grid. This ensures that the pattern is symmetrical without having to do too much counting or worry about being precise with your tools, as the Square Marquee and Pen tool both automatically snap to the grid making custom shape creation a painless task. You will need to download a wood texture but it's free!

essentials

SKILL LEVEL

Beginner
Intermediate
Expert

TIME TAKEN

1-2 hours

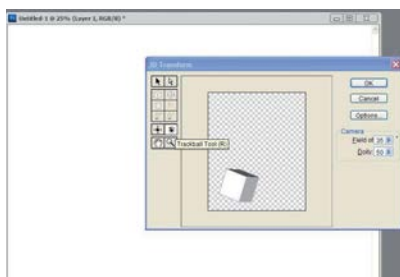
YOUR EXPERT

David
Cousens



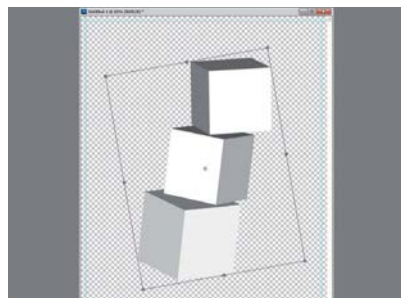
RENDER AND LIGHT THE ALPHABET BLOCKS

Use the 3D Transform tool to get started



01 Create the first cube Create a new layer (Shift+Ctrl/Cmd+N) then go to Filter>Render>3D Transform and select the Cube tool (M). Click and drag your cursor to create a wireframe cube in the preview box. Use the Trackball tool (R) to drag the cube into position; it must be fully rotated so that you can see three shaded sides otherwise Photoshop will not render them!

02 Three is the magic number Create two more new layers and repeat the previous steps to make two additional cubes. Don't worry that the lighting for each box is inconsistent; we'll fix that in the next step. Position with the Free Transform tool (Ctrl/Cmd+T) so they are stacked up, ensuring you hold Shift to maintain their proportions.



03 Fix the lighting Fill the squares with three different shades of brown using the Paint Bucket tool (G), making the lighting effect consistent for them. Open up the wood texture from mayang.com (<http://tinyurl.com/6dovj3w>). Press Ctrl/Cmd+A then Ctrl/Cmd+C to select and copy the image. Ctrl/Cmd-click the first block's thumbnail in the Layers palette to select everything on that layer ready for the next step.

KEY SKILLS COVERED

What you'll learn

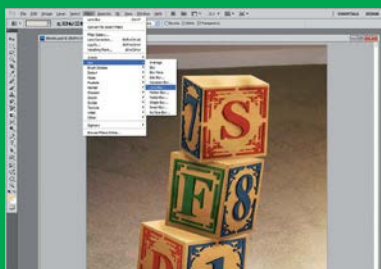
3D TRANSFORM TOOL
CUSTOM SHAPES
LINEAR AND RADIAL GRADIENT TOOLS
GRIDS AND GUIDES
USING PHOTOS AS TEXTURES
COPYING AND MERGING LAYERS



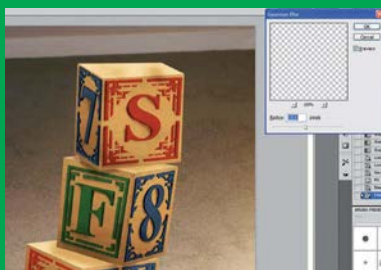
PHOTOSHOP CS AND ABOVE | WORKS WITH

ADD A PHOTO BACKGROUND

With your wooden blocks finished it's time to give them a background. To begin with, copy and paste a photo of some carpet or flooring beneath your blocks.



Add depth of field Duplicate your photo, click Filter>Blur>Lens Blur then Layer>Layer Mask>Reveal All. Use a black Radial gradient to bring out the details.



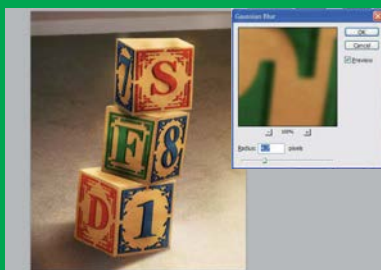
Add a shadow layer Set the layer's blend mode to Multiply with an Opacity of 72%, and then make the Shadow dark blue. Finish by adding a Gaussian Blur of 19.5 pixels.



Make the blocks sink Use the Linear Gradient tool to alter the shadow. Add a layer mask to the first block's group and paint on it to fake carpet fibres obscuring the block.



Small details and finishing touches Use the Radial Gradient tool to add glare on the surface of the blocks then use a 5px airbrush to paint scratches on the wood.

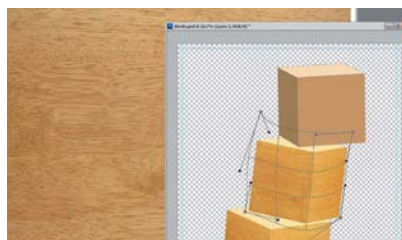


Soft Light Press Ctrl/Cmd+A, Shift+Ctrl/Cmd+C then Ctrl/Cmd+V at the top of the image. Use the Soft Light blend mode with 20% Opacity and a Gaussian Blur of 4.7 pixels.

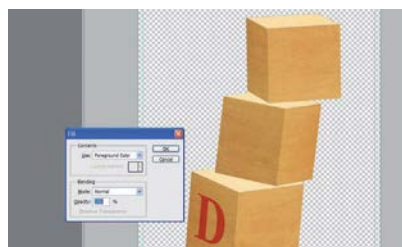


ADD 3D REALISM

Faking depth, texture and shading



04 Make the texture fit with the Warp Tool Go to Edit>Paste Into and bring in the wood texture, changing the layer's blend mode to Overlay. Then hit Ctrl/Cmd+T and click on the Warp icon. Drag the handles to manipulate the wood texture so it fits the shape of the block. Right-click on the texture's layer and select Create Clipping Mask. Repeat for all three blocks with the same texture.



06 Make a darker copy of the letter Create a new layer then click Edit>Paste in Place. Drag this copied layer below the original letter layer in the Layers palette and lock the transparent pixels by clicking on the chessboard icon. Fill it with a dark red colour by pressing Shift-Backspace and select Contents-Use: Foreground Color in the dialog box that appears.



05 Add a letter to the block Use the Type tool (T) to type a letter. We used Times New Roman but pick any font you like. Right-click the text's layer and select Rasterize Type. Press Ctrl/Cmd+T to Free Transform, right-click inside the box and select Distort. Drag the handles to match the perspective of the block. Make a copy using Ctrl/Cmd+C.



07 Fake 3D depth Hold Ctrl/Cmd+Alt and Press the right arrow key five times to make nudged duplicates of the layer. Hold Shift and click on all of the duplicated layers in the Layers palette and merge them (Ctrl/Cmd+E). Repeat this for all of the letters and numbers and then group the characters with their respective blocks by Shift-clicking the layers and pressing Ctrl/Cmd+G.

08 Color Burn Create a new layer below the first block's wood texture. Tick Use Previous Layer to Create Clipping Mask, with the Color Burn blend mode at 50% Opacity. Select the Linear Gradient tool with 25% Opacity, Foreground to Transparent colour: R:5 G:45 B:4. Select the left face of the block and apply a Linear gradient.



FINISH THE STACK

Create your own custom shapes to make detailed borders

Tip



Make life easier with layer groups

Working on images with multiple layers can become very confusing very quickly. Avoid this by making layer groups. Simply hold Shift and collect all of the relevant layers then press Ctrl/Cmd+G. You can then apply effects or changes to an entire group.



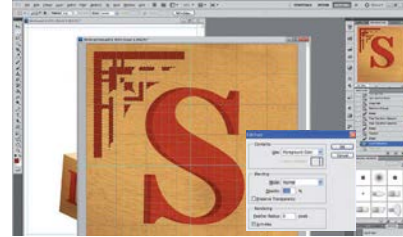
09 Add shading to all three blocks

Repeat the selection and gradient process for the other two faces of the first block, switching to a Radial gradient to apply a more subtle shadow on the top face. When finished, repeat the previous two steps for the other blocks. If necessary use Free Transform (Distort) to fix the perspective of your boxes at this point.



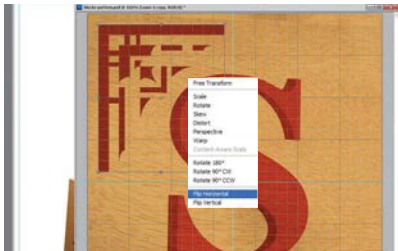
10 Perspective Crop

Use the Magic Wand to select the front face of the third block, press Shift+Ctrl/Cmd+C to copy from all visible layers and create a new document (Ctrl/Cmd+N). Paste the contents in with Ctrl/Cmd+V. Using the Crop tool (C), highlight the entire document then tick the Perspective box and drag the handles to the corners of the block face. Press Enter.



11 Add Guides and Grids from the View menu

Click View>New Guide and enter a value of 50% Vertical and 50% Horizontal. Bring up a grid with View>Show>Grid and ensure Snap is enabled (Click View>Snap). Use the Square Marquee tool (M) to draw in the border (use the Pen tool for the triangular shapes) and fill the selections using the Shift-Backspace method.



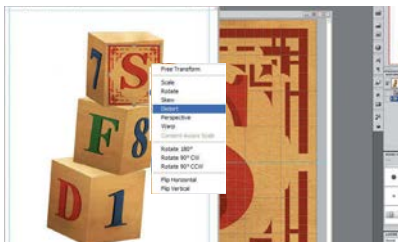
12 Complete the border

Press Ctrl/Cmd+J to duplicate your border then use the Free Transform tool and right-click in the bounding box. Select Flip Horizontal so it matches symmetrically. Press Ctrl/Cmd+E to merge the layers together, then press Ctrl/Cmd+J and Ctrl/Cmd+T again, this time choosing Flip Vertical and move the border down before merging layers again.



13 Make a custom shape

Ctrl/Cmd-click the border layer's thumbnail then switch to the Paths tab. Click the Make a Work Path from the selection icon and go to Edit>Define Custom Shape and name your shape when prompted. Create a new layer, select the Custom Shape tool (U) then select your shape from the navigation bar's menu.



14 Bring in the border and copy it

Hold Shift while you click and drag to maintain the proportions of your custom shape and then distort the border into position over the blocks. Using the same method as the letters, create a new layer, select and copy the border, paste in place and then lock the layer's transparency. Make the border darker and drag it below the original.



15 Fake the depth of the borders

Hold Ctrl/Cmd+Alt then press the left arrow three times to make the border appear deeper. Shift-click the copied layers and press Ctrl/Cmd+E to merge them together. If necessary, Shift-click the letter layer and use the Free Transform tool to reduce them to fit the borders. Repeat to create two new borders and place them on the remaining block faces.



Layer structure

Have a block party

Soft light blur

Extra glare

Overlay

Block 3 group

Block 2 group

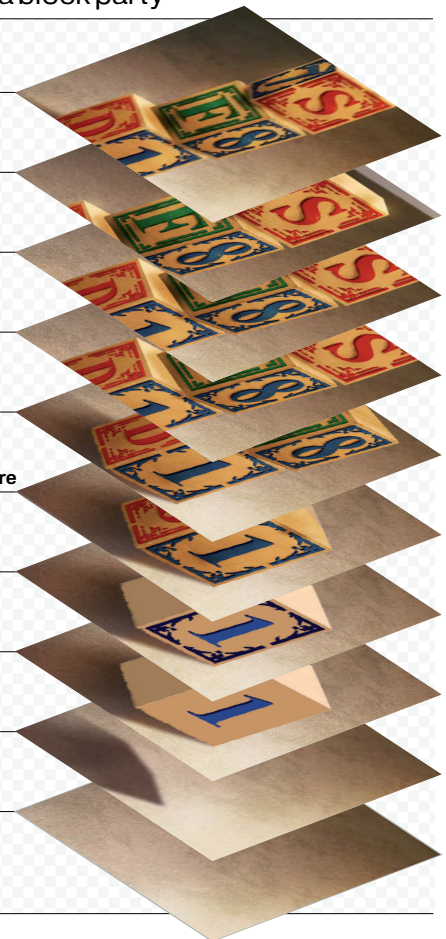
Block 1 wood texture

Block 1 letter

Block 1 number

Shadow

Carpet photo





The Batch command

Actions are useful things, but how about using an action on multiple images? Enter the marvellous Batch command



If the thought of scripts has you breaking out in a nervous sweat but you're faced with 50 photos all needing the same kind of treatment, don't despair; the world of actions and the Batch command were made for you. Actions are recorded processes that can be applied automatically, but only to one image at a time. The job of the Batch command is to gather up either all open images, or those in a specific folder (it can also process images via Adobe Bridge and Import) and apply a specific action to all of them. The files are then saved to another folder of your choosing. Take, for example, a set of portrait photos that you want to

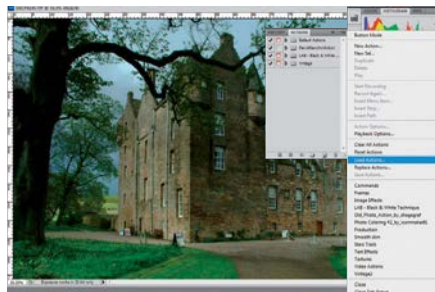
convert to black and white. There's no need to laboriously manually convert each one because you can just run a Batch command to apply a black-white gradient and save a new file, leaving the originals untouched, all in one fell swoop. To access it, simply go to File>Automate>Batch which brings up the Batch dialog. The interesting thing is that actions can be saved in sets, so each set can offer multiple options. Photoshop usually comes with a range of presets, however it only loads the Default Actions set as standard. In this article we'll look at the basics of how to use the Batch command as well as how to add more actions to the list for all your image-editing needs.



Load up the effect

Before you can batch, you must have an action

The Batch command will only run the actions that you have loaded, so the first step to making full use of it is to get all the actions that you want loaded up. You can download lots of great ones for free and keep them neatly stored in the folder along side those that come with Photoshop. Ensure any files are unzipped and copy them to the Photoshop>Presets>Actions folder. Then, in Photoshop, click on the Actions palette and then the down arrow in the top right corner. Look down the menu until you find Load Actions. Click on it and navigate to the Actions folder to load them in.



Action options

Understand and customise sets

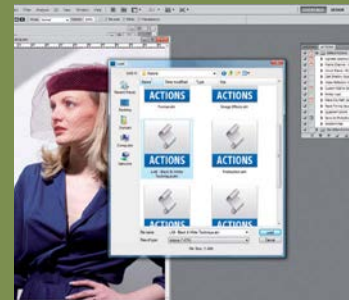
It's all well and good loading up the Batch command with wild and wonderful actions you've downloaded, but it makes sense to know what it is they are actually going to do. To find out, ensure the action is loaded, then go to the Actions palette and click on the down arrow in front of the action's name. This will list all the processes that are going to be applied. If one element throws up a dialog box in mid-process and you normally just hit return to OK it, you can turn off these individual dialog prompts here. You can also skip individual steps in the action as well – just remove the tick on the left to customise the set to a particular image.



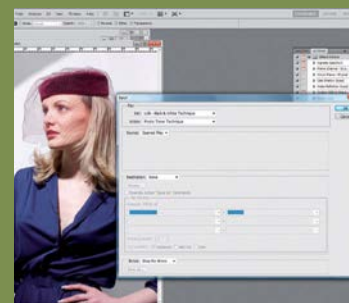
Let's go monochrome



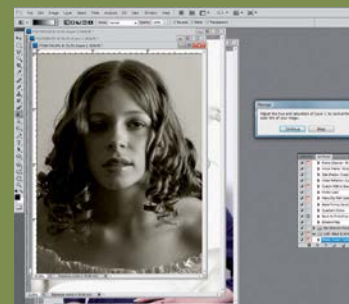
The LAB Photo Toner action set comes with CS4 and is great for editing. We used it with a selection of portrait images, but the principle works with any action.



01 Load them up
Firstly, load all of your images into Photoshop. Click on the Actions palette, and then the down arrow on the right. Click on Load Actions. Select the 'LAB - Black & White Technique.atn' file and load it on in.



02 Set the parameters
The next step is to go to File>Automate>Batch. Click on the down arrow in the Set box and select the LAB - Black & White Technique action. Now select the Source as Opened Files and the Destination as None.



03 Make adjustments
By default, this action will give your portraits a light sepia effect. As it runs it will prompt to Continue or Stop altogether. Click on Continue and either adjust the saturation or simply click on OK to continue through each.



Load the set In the Set box, select the set of actions that you want to use from those already loaded up. Underneath this, select the specific action you want. If the set only has one action then the same name will appear.

Import options The fastest way to process a number of files is to load them from a specific folder. Photoshop will flag colour profile mismatches between your workspace and the image so it's best to suppress this and also other opening option dialogs.



Start image

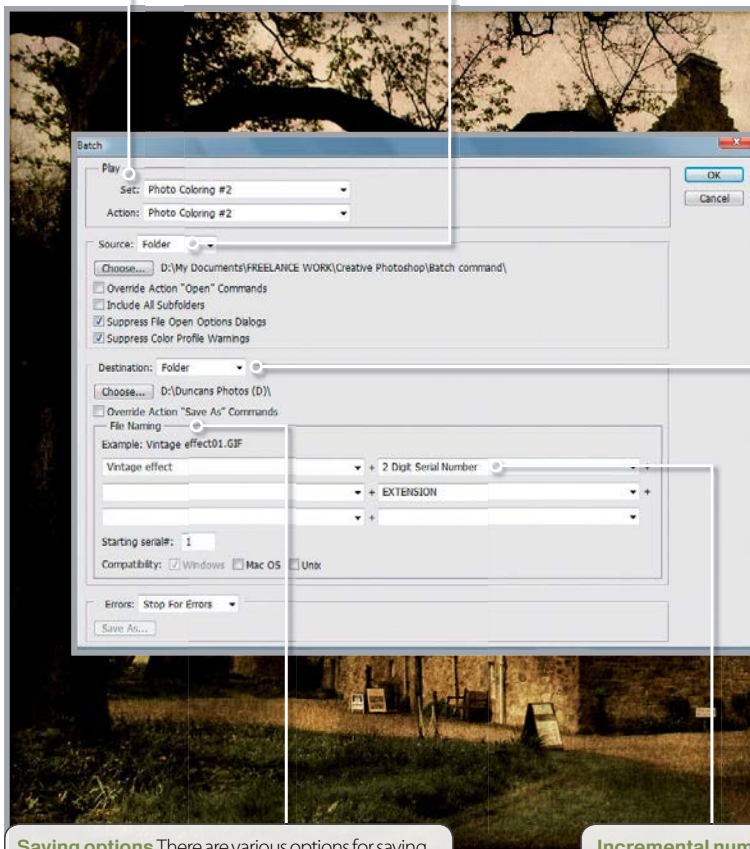
Where to put the files Files can be left open so that you can check the results and make further adjustments if necessary. Alternatively, they can be saved directly at the end of the action to the folder specified in the Choose box, or to various locations using the individual Save commands.

Tip



Don't stop me now

If you're running a batch process on a large number of files where you want the same kind of result, – say for a wedding or portrait shoot – don't let individual errors interrupt the process. Save error reports to a log so everything gets processed first.



Saving options There are various options for saving files, including simply using the same file names and extensions. This is important because uncompressed formats will save directly while those with compression options like JPEGs will pop up a Save dialog box.

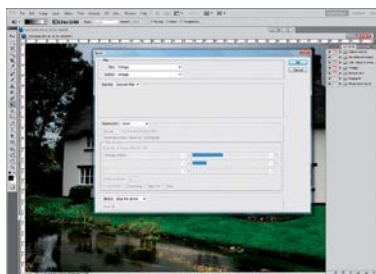
Incremental numbering Files can also be saved with new names and an increasing numerical file number so that they can be easily grouped together when finished. Up to three rules each can be created for both the name and extensions, in any combination.



Safety first

Manage your actions before saving

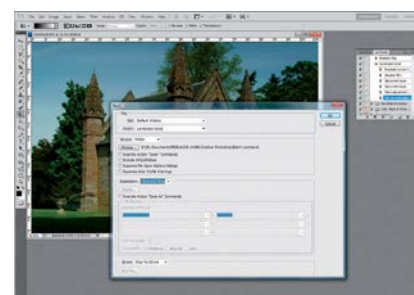
If an action has a lot of processing in its set, it can be difficult to tell exactly what the final result is going to be. For that reason, it's worth running an example before you waste memory saving the results. That way you can be sure you're happy with what has been done. The simplest way to check a batch of images is to run the Batch command on the open files in Photoshop, then check the results and make any adjustments before manually saving. If the Batch prompts to flatten an image before processing the next one, stop that action but then let it continue with the next one, so all the adjustments remain editable.



Simple actions

Add your own to the process

You can create and add your own actions to the sets that are already loaded by recording the process and saving it. Once saved, the Batch command can access your recorded action and use it. If it's something fairly simple where you know what kind of result it is going to give, there's no need to individually check each file before saving. Instead, in the Destination box enter Save and Close as the option to have it automatically resave the file once the action set has run.





KEY SKILLS COVERED

What you'll learn

CUSTOM SHAPE TOOL
LAYER BLENDING MODES
TRANSFORM TOOL
GRADIENT MAP
MOVE TOOL
TEXT TOOL

Forge a film strip

essentials

SKILL LEVEL

Beginner
Intermediate
Expert

TIME TAKEN

15 minutes

YOUR EXPERT

Duncan Evans

ON THE DISC

filmstrip
final.psd

Bring back the days of developing film at the chemist's with a strip of negatives



The objective of this tutorial is to create a film strip effect, not the kind from the movies, but the negative strips you get when having print film developed. For these kind of pictures, the negatives

are included with the photos so that you can have further prints made, and are notable for the fact that the image is reversed – the dark elements are light and the light elements are dark – and that they are a kind of brown-black rather than black and white. We are going to use the Custom Shape tool for the film strip itself and then the Transform tools to get it into a vertical orientation. We'll add some text with the Text tool (of course), drop in pictures and resize

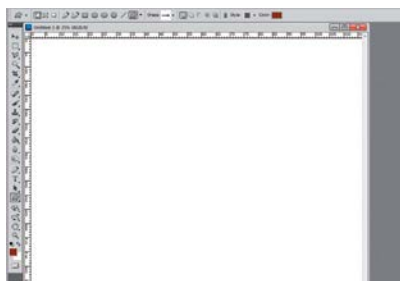
them to fit, then invert the image and add a colour layer to tone it to the right shade. One issue regarding this tutorial is what resolution you need the strip and the images to be. Well, the custom shape film strip is a vector shape, so it can be resized without any loss of detail. If you are simply uploading the finished result to a website then you won't need a new document any larger than 1,000 x 1,000 pixels. However, if you are printing it out it needs to be larger and so do the pictures that you are dropping into the slots. For this project we're starting with a canvas of 3,300 x 3,300 pixels. The finished result won't be that wide of course, but it makes it easier to resize the custom shape if we start with a larger document.

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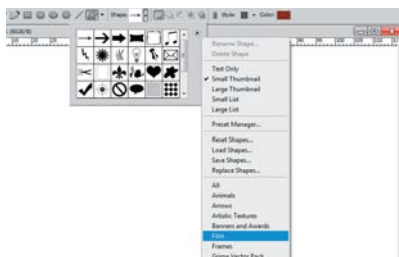


A POSITIVE IMPRESSION

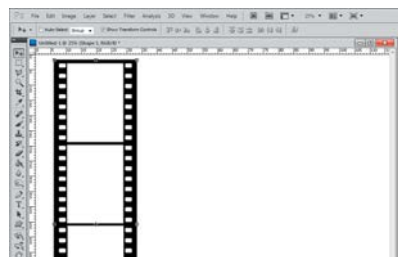
Create the film strip and the negative effect



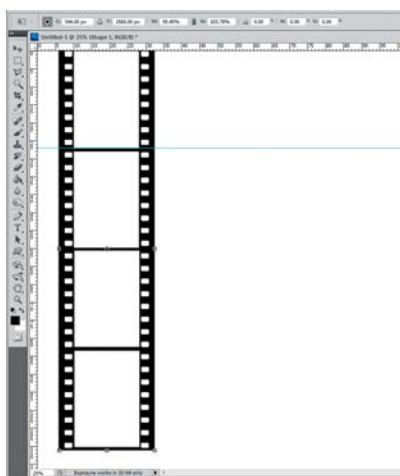
01 Getting started Firstly create a new, blank image, 3,300 pixels square. This is for a high-resolution printed version of your film strip. Next, click on the Shape tools on the right side of the toolbox. On the top row, click on the icon for Custom Shapes.



02 Load up the film strip A box will have appeared called Shape, and in this are the defaults. Click on the down arrow to reveal them and then the right arrow in this dialog. Look down the list and click on Film, then OK when prompted. Two shapes are loaded, a single frame and a multi-frame.

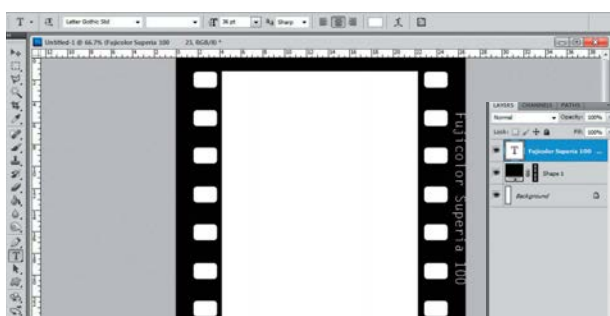


03 Rotate the film Click on the multi-frame and then, on the canvas, drag and release to create a strip most of the width of the image. Click on the Move tool and put a tick in the Show Transform Controls box. Grab the bottom-right edge of the strip and rotate it vertically. Click to apply.



04 Size it like 35mm

This is the tricky bit. Make sure that you have rulers displayed and move the film strip so that you can measure the shape of the top frame. It's best to push it right to the top edge and use a guide line horizontally. Set the guide at 27mm and make the interior width 18mm. Resize and apply (see the tip box for more).



05 Adding text Move the film strip into the top-left corner of the canvas and then use the Crop tool to trim off the waste. Click on the Type tool and select Letter Gothic Std at 36pt, Sharp. Type in the name of your film stock, some spaces and then the frame number. With the Move tool, flip the text 90 degrees and position it on the strip. Use the Text tool to change the colour of the text to white.



06 Add first picture Duplicate the text layer and change the frame number incrementally, placing it over the next frame. Repeat for all four frames. Save the project here. Now it's time to add the images. Open a window where they are located, drag the first image and drop it directly into the project. Move this picture layer down so that it sits underneath the first shape's layer.



07 Add all the images Click on the Move tool and position the image using the top-left corner. Use the Transform Control on the bottom right to size the image into the gap, then click to apply it. In CS5 when you drag and drop images like this they are turned into Smart Objects and you can position and resize them immediately.



08 Invert and fill In the Adjustments palette, click on Gradient Map. Set white as the Foreground colour and black as the Background. Next, click on Add New Layer. Double-click on the Foreground colour and change it to R:126, G:40 and B:5. Use the Paint Bucket tool to fill the layer and change the blend mode to Multiply for a light effect or Linear Burn for a darker one.

Tip



Sizing up the film strip

The aim, when sizing the inside of the film strip (where the image itself will go), is to make sure that it is in the aspect ratio of 3:2. 35mm is actually 36mm x 24mm, so when re-creating this vertically, the vertical side needs to be 50% longer than the width. It would be easy if it was just the film itself, but the film frame adds more on sideways than it does lengthways in this case. As long as the interior shape is 3:2 then it will be the right aspect ratio and you can make it as large or small as you like for your individual project.

Tip



Picture sizes

Most DSLRs shoot 3:2 ratio images, and some compacts have that option. Most compacts shoot 4:3 aspect ratio, which will look odd if you try to resize them to fit the gaps. Instead, use the Crop tool with a 3:2 setting to crop the images that you are going to use so they are the right shape to begin with. Perfect for a smooth workflow.





essentials

SKILL LEVEL

 Beginner
Intermediate
Expert

TIME TAKEN

 30 minutes

YOUR EXPERT

 Zoe Mutter

ON THE DISC

 Starter out of
bounds.jpg
Final image
FLAT.psd





Out of bounds effect

Make your image appear to escape its frame using the out of bounds effect

The out of bounds effect can be used to really make your image pop and give it a three-dimensional appearance.

When using this technique, an object or animal is made to look like it is coming out of a frame. Certain photographs work better than others when creating this effect. Images that are particularly suitable to use are those with a background that is not white and that have elements of

the main object or person protruding beyond the main area of the image. The technique makes use of an image border or frame from which the main subject of the photograph is coming out. Depending on the image you are using, it may work better to have the person or animal walking into the frame instead from a different or even a blank environment. This would still require you to leave a leg or arm outside to give it that three-dimensional feel. The

technique can be used to great effect with objects too. Why not have a go at making a boat or car appear to be bursting out of the boundaries of a frame?

One of the main tricks to creating a successful out of bounds effect is masking, and there are many ways to achieve the perfect mask. Although in this tutorial we have used the Pen tool, if you prefer you can also do it freehand without a marquee outline and just the Brush tool.

KEY SKILLS COVERED

What you'll learn

MASKING
TECHNIQUES
PATHS
PEN TOOL
ADJUSTING
PERSPECTIVE



ORGANISE YOUR LAYERS AND ASSESS THE IMAGE

Decide which parts of the image will come out of the frame



01 Layer it up Open the image, double-click it in the Layers palette and name it Original. Right-click the layer and choose Duplicate Layer. Call this Original Copy and move it below Original. Make two more layers. Fill the bottom one with white and the other with black, naming them Background White and Background Black respectively. Finally create a top layer and call it Frame.



02 Add the masks Add layer masks to both the Original and Frame layers by selecting them (simply click) and then clicking the Layer Mask button in the bottom of the Layers palette. You can turn off the visibility of the Original Copy layer for now by clicking the eye icon beside it.



03 Take a closer look Assess your photograph and decide which parts of the image you want to be coming out of the frame. For this image, part of the horse's leg and head will be outside so it looks like the horse is walking out of the picture.

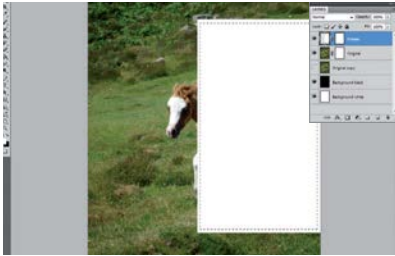


WORKS WITH | PHOTOSHOP 7 UPWARDS



MASKING TECHNIQUES ARE KEY

Create an outline and then mask out unwanted areas



04 Frame the scene Select the Frame layer and choose the Rectangular Marquee tool. Draw a rectangle the size of the frame you want for your picture and fill it in white with the Paint Bucket tool. Before deselecting, go to Select>Modify>Contract and enter 40px into the value box. Press Backspace and the middle area will disappear.



05 Room to work To give yourself more space at the edge of the image choose Image>Canvas Size. Select Percent as the measurement from the drop-down menu to the right of each value. Enter 150 into the Width value box and hit OK.



06 Alter the perspective With the Frame layer still selected, choose Edit>Free Transform. While holding down the Ctrl/Cmd key, click on the corners of the frame and drag them to adjust its shape and make the legs of the horse appear to come out of the frame.



07 Bring up the Paths palette There are many ways to mask out areas of an image. First we need to make a selection around the edge of the horse that you want to mask. You can use the Brush tool to do this, but to get a more precise selection, we are first going to use the Pen tool to create a path around the horse. Choose Window>Paths.



08 Pen technique Click the Create New Path icon in the bottom of the Paths dialog. Choose the Pen tool and make sure Paths is selected in the top Options bar. Use the tool to click around the edge of the left side of the horse that will overlap the frame. See the side panel of steps for some tips on how to use the Pen tool.

Tip



Better brush control

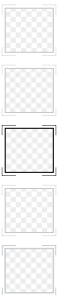
It can be tricky to get a precise edge at the outline of the horse when masking, but changing the size of the brush used to mask can help. One way to do this is to select the Brush tool and then click the arrow in the top Options bar to open the Brush Preset Picker then use the sliders to adjust the Size and Hardness. However, it is quicker to use the { and } keys instead to make the brush smaller or larger.



09 Create an outline Once you have gone around the areas of the horse, close the path by clicking on the first point. Ctrl/Cmd-click the path in the Paths dialog to bring up a marquee outline and then you can begin the masking. Activate the layer mask on the Original layer by clicking on it in the Layers palette.



10 Paint it black Choose Select>Inverse to make a selection of the area outside of the outline of the horse. Set the Foreground colour to black. Using the Brush tool set the Master Diameter to 70px with a Hardness of 100% and paint out the areas of the image that you want to be hidden. The photograph will be hidden as it is painted over.



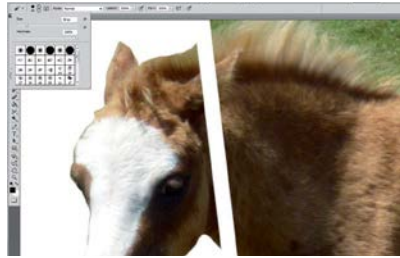


FINE-TUNE THE FRAME

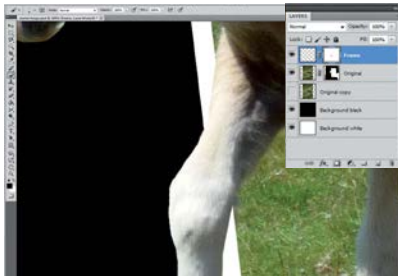
Trotting pony, hidden background



11 Mask it out As the marquee you created as a path is visible, just the areas you want to erase outside of it are hidden. If you mask any areas by mistake, choose white as the Foreground colour and just brush to reveal the image again. Making the Background White layer visible may also help you to see if you have missed any areas.



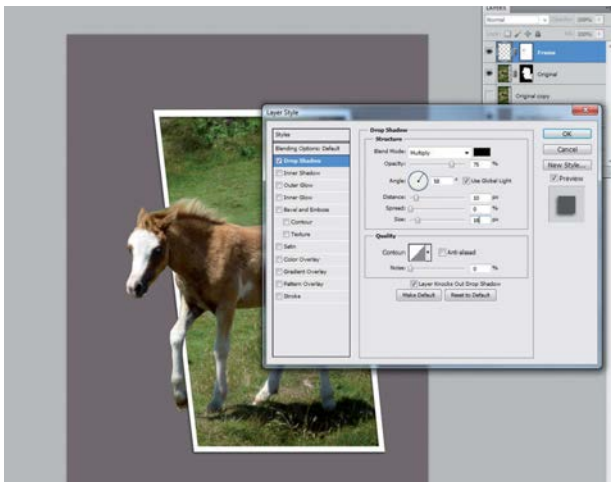
12 Precision tools To fine-tune the masking, zoom in to the area where the horse's leg or head is. With the Brush tool selected, leave the Hardness at 100 and set it to a smaller size. Using the same technique as before, you can switch between black and white as the Foreground colour to erase away or reveal parts of the image precisely.



13 Masking out the frame Click the layer mask on the Frame layer. The same masking method as before is used to erase the areas of the frame that are blocking parts of the horse's leg or head that need to be visible. You may need a small brush for this. These areas of the horse should now appear to be on top of the white frame.



14 Bring it together with a background Add another layer called Grey Background above the Background Black layer. Fill it with a grey colour and use the Rectangular Marquee tool to mark out a box around the image of the horse. Choose Image>Crop to crop to the size you want for the finished image.



15 The third dimension

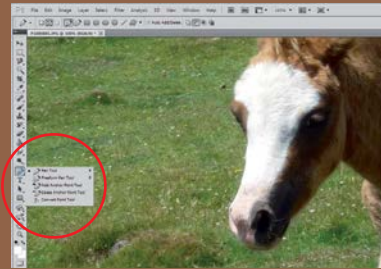
To give the image extra depth and make it appear more three-dimensional, it helps to add shadows. Double-click on the Frame layer to bring up the Layer Style window. Choose Drop Shadow and select a blend mode of Multiply with a colour of black.

PEN PERFECTION

To achieve precise selections around the edge of the horse's head and leg, use the Pen tool. Click around the edge of the horse and drag to curve the lines to create a smooth and accurate outline.



Palettes and paths Choose Window>Paths and click Create New Path in the bottom of the palette. Double-click the path and enter a name for your selection.



Pen options Zoom in to the horse's head (or the area you are making a selection of). Choose the Pen tool and make sure Paths is selected in the Options bar.



Point to point Click to create the first point of the outline on the horse's head. Create a second point by clicking and keep hold of your mouse until you're finished.



Drag to curve Drag up and down or to the side and you will see handles appear. This dragging motion allows you to achieve a curve in the otherwise straight outline.



Make your marquee Work your way around the outline and click back at the first point to close the path. Ctrl/Cmd-click on the path to convert it into a selection.



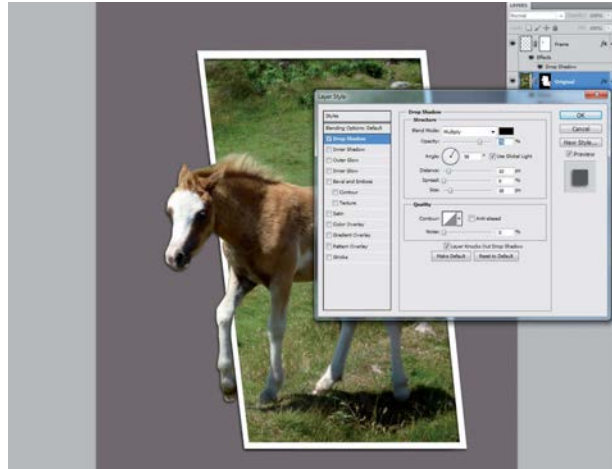


THIS IMAGE HAS GOT LEGS

Make the horse appear to walk out of the scene



16 Shadow settings Change the Opacity to 75% and the angle to 58. Make sure Use Global Light is checked and set the Distance to 10px, the Spread to 0% and the Size to 18px.



17 Add depth to the horse image Repeat this with the Original layer to create a shadow around the edge of the horse. Double-click on the Original layer to bring up the Layer Style window and enter the same settings as you did for the shadow on the Frame layer.



18 Background bleed off If you would like to have a bleeding off area of grass coming out of the frame too, click on the Original Copy layer to make it visible. Choose the Lasso Marquee tool and set the Feather to 100px in the top Options bar.



19 Mark out the grass Loosely draw out an area to the left of the horse's leg that the horse can appear to walk onto. Now choose Select>Inverse and hit Backspace to remove everything except the small patch of grass that will be his walkway.



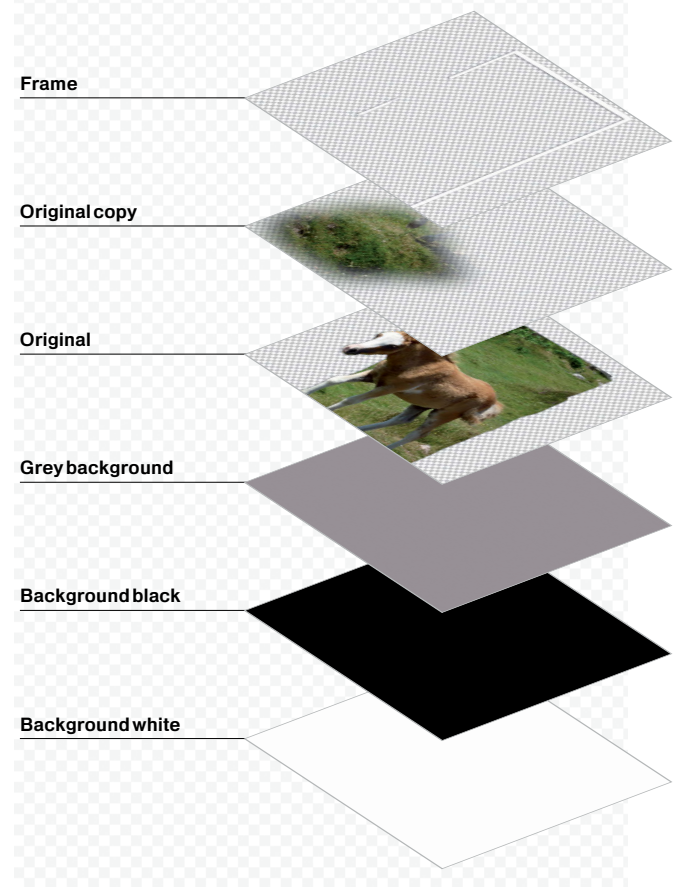
20 Perfect the effect

Move the Original Copy layer above Original. Now, using the same masking method, remove areas of the white frame that appear over the top of the grass that is in front of the horse, and the image is ready.



Image structure

Different layers around



Put some sparkle into dull images using gradients

Edit with gradients



essentials

SKILL LEVEL

Beginner
Intermediate
Expert

TIME TAKEN

Fiveminutes

YOUR EXPERT

JoCole



Gradients are often used in the realm of digital design, but rarely do they come into play for photo edits.

They can actually be extremely useful, especially when teamed with blending modes. In our example here, we have a photo taken on a dull day. The sky is grey and the foreground looks underexposed. By applying a gradient, though, it's possible to add colour to the sky and also deal with the exposure problem. And it all starts with a selection...

KEY SKILLS COVERED

What you'll learn

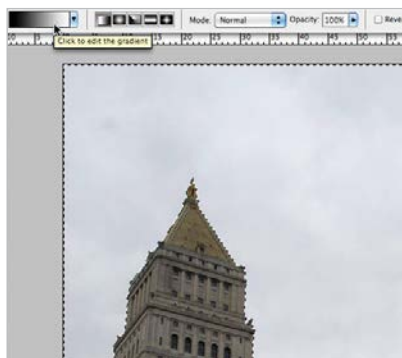
BOOST SKIES
IMPROVE EXPOSURE

Quick tip: Experiment with different gradient colours to emulate the look of traditional lens filters

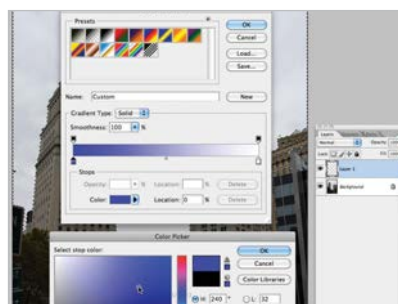


FIX DULL SKIES AND POOR EXPOSURE

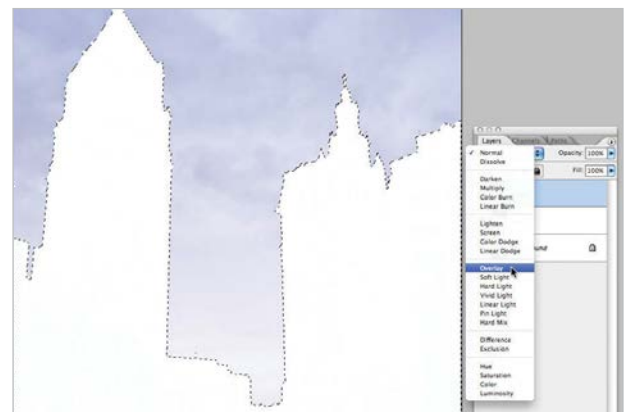
Three steps to culling the dull



01 Make a selection First up, isolate the sky. Use the Magic Wand if there is lots of contrast. Once selected, create a new layer and then click on the Gradient tool. Make sure you have Linear Gradient selected and then click the Gradient bar to open the Gradient Editor.



02 Pick your hue Click the Black, White gradient from the Presets panel then click the black Color Stop below the gradient bar. Click the Color bar at the bottom left and then select a dark blue. Click OK to return to your canvas and hold down Shift on the keyboard to drag the cursor from the top to the bottom. Fill the sky area with blue.



03 Blend to edit To let the gradient colour merge with the photo, pick the Overlay blending mode. Now create a new layer, go to Select>Inverse and then Edit>Fill and pick White. Apply the Overlay blend mode again and the dull foreground will zing!

WORKS WITH | PHOTOSHOP 7 AND ABOVE



Create dramatic misty landscapes

Give landscape images a magical, ethereal look with adjustment layers and filters



It is often said that the best photos are taken earlier in the morning or late in the evening. Waking up

early and heading out to shoot can be a wonderful experience; there are very few distractions for one and early morning light can make even the duller surroundings look magical. However, for those of us who can't seem to stop hitting the snooze button, or can't get out late

either to catch that perfect light, we can rely on Photoshop being there to lend us a helping hand to create the effect.

In this tutorial you will learn how to create a misty, washed out effect that is as convincing as if you had set out with your camera at the crack of dawn. We will start by adjusting the saturation and lightness of a photo by using a Hue/Saturation adjustment layer. We will then make a layer of mist. This is created by using the

Clouds filter and the blending options. Blending options give us great control over how layers blend with one another, and here we will use it to remove lots of the grey pixels leaving only the wispy white fog effect. For more realism, we are also going to use a photo of a cloud blended and masked above our mist layer, before one final adjustment to enhance the sky using the Clouds filter again, resulting in a powerful image with texture and depth.

essentials

SKILL LEVEL

Beginner
Intermediate
Expert

TIME TAKEN

30 minutes

YOUR EXPERT

Simon Rudd

Please download the source image from www.sxc.hu/photo/1215270 and the clouds. jpg from www.sxc.hu/photo/1324914

WORKS WITH | PHOTOSHOP 7 AND ABOVE



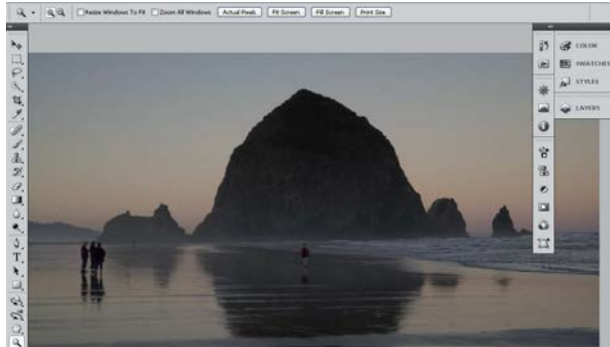
WASH PHOTOS WITH DIGITAL MIST

Create instant atmosphere with gradients and layer masks

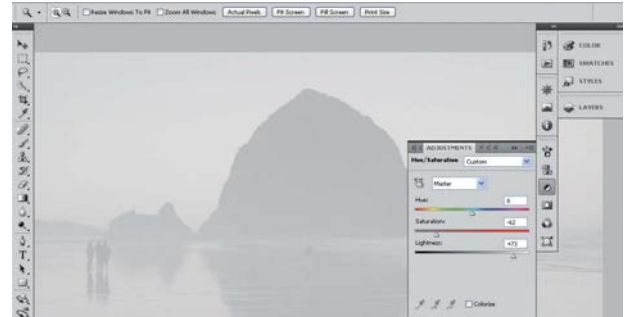
KEY SKILLS COVERED

What you'll learn

CLOUDSFILTER
HUE / SATURATION
BLEND MODES
LAYER MASKS
GRADIENTS



01 Bright beginnings We start by opening our source photo in Photoshop; simply download from the link listed. We chose a sunrise photo, but you can choose whatever you like but note that the results will differ with different sources.



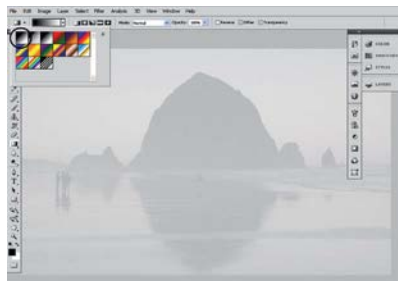
02 Adjustment layer We now want to add a Hue/Saturation adjustment layer above our Background. We do this by going to Layers>New Adjustment Layer>Hue/Saturation. Set the Saturation to around -62 and the Lightness to +73. This will make the photo very washed out but we will fix this in the next step.

Tip

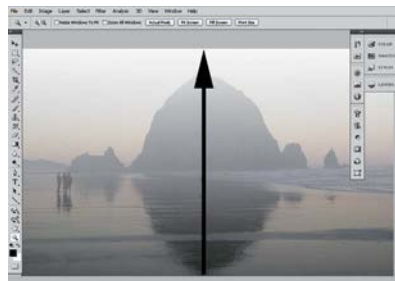


Using mist in other pictures

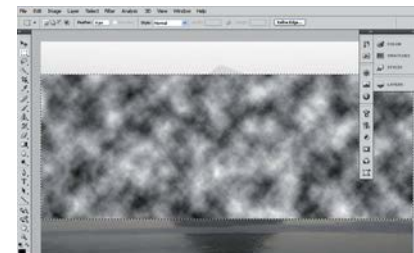
We used mist in this tutorial to make it look like the photo was taken early in the morning, but we can also use the same techniques to produce a totally different effect. For example, in step 2 we increased the lightness, but if we clicked Colorize, setting Hue to 198 and reducing lightness to around -30, then also set the blending options to Multiply, we could give the picture an eerie feel. Many different effects can be achieved with simple changes.



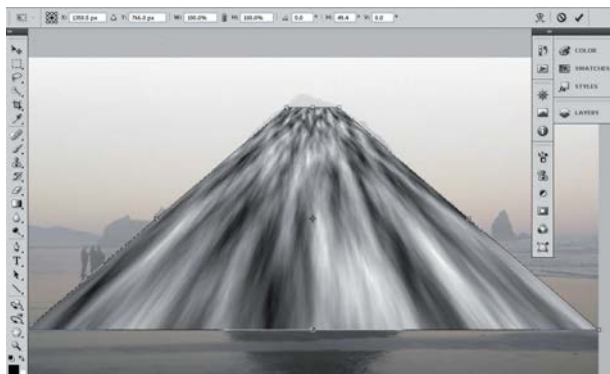
03 Gradients The adjustment layer we just created will have a layer mask attached to it, and we are going to use this to mask away some of the effect from the previous step. First we need to choose the Gradient tool from the Toolbar making sure we have the Foreground to Background gradient chosen in the Options bar.



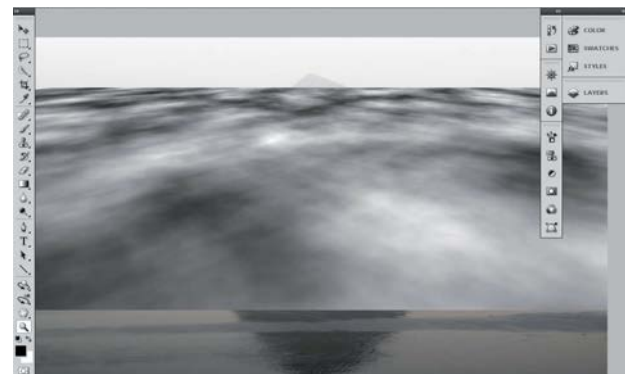
04 Create a fading effect Press D then X on your keyboard to reset the swatches to black for the Foreground colour and white for the Background. Click on the layer mask of the adjustment layer to activate it. We want to pull a gradient from the bottom of the picture to the top to mask some of the adjustment, creating a fade.



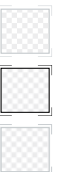
05 Make some mist Make a new layer above the Hue/Saturation adjustment layer called Mist, and choose the Rectangular Marquee tool. Draw out a selection taking up about two thirds of the document in the middle of the picture. Fill the selection with Filter>Render>Clouds. Once this is complete, press Ctrl/Cmd+D on your keyboard to remove the selection.



06 Distort the mist Select the Mist layer and go to Edit>Transform>Distort. Now, while holding the Shift and Alt keys, move the top-right anchor towards the middle of the picture. Both the left and right-hand side anchors should move in. When you have an image similar to the example, click the tick.



07 Resize and crop We now have a nice shape, but it doesn't look much like mist. We need to increase the width of the Mist layer by going to Edit>Transform>Scale, and in the Options bar set the width to 1,000%. Select the Crop tool from the Toolbar and select the whole canvas, then click the tick in the top right corner.





FINISH YOUR FOGGY PHOTO

Incorporate a cloud image for realism



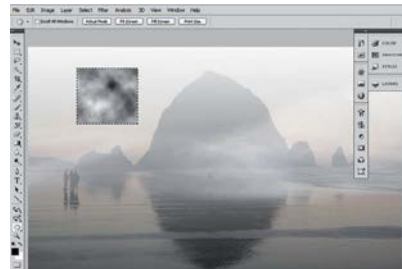
08 Blending options First set the layer blending mode for the mist to Screen. Now use the blending options to reduce the effect by right-clicking on the layer's icon in the Layers palette and choose Blending Options from the menu. Next, find the Blend If section. The top slider labelled This Layer is the one we wish to adjust.



09 Blend If Hold the Alt key and move the slider so it reads 0 and 240 and then click OK. The mist will appear more like mist, but the top will have a hard edge. Add a layer mask to the Mist layer (Layer>Layer Mask>Reveal All) and use a large black soft edged brush to mask out the top edge.



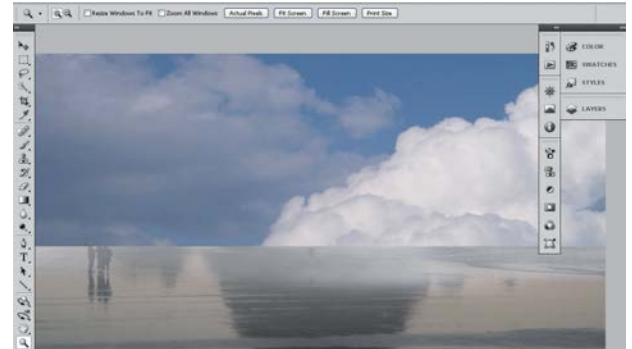
11 Mask the sky First we want to add a Reveal All layer mask to the Clouds layer, and we do this by going to Layer>Layer Mask>Reveal all. Set the blending mode to Soft Light, then use a large soft edge brush with the Foreground colour set to black. This will allow you to simply mask away unwanted sections of the clouds and blue sky.



12 Background texture Most of the sky is hidden in the mist, but we can make the sky that is visible a bit more interesting. Make a new layer above the Background called Sky, then using the Rectangular Marquee tool, draw out a small square and fill it with clouds (Filter>Render>Clouds).



13 Stretch to fit Using the Free Transform tool, stretch the square out so it fits over the top half, and set the blending mode to Multiply. This will remove all the white from the layer. Finally add a Reveal All layer mask to the Sky layer, and then, using the same brush as before, mask out some of the clouds to finish.



10 Real clouds Now open a clouds photo (see our link on the first page or use your own), copy (Select>All, Edit>Copy) then paste (Edit>Paste) the photo above our Mist layer. Name this new layer Clouds and use the Free Transform command (Edit>Free Transform) to resize it so it fits across the top half of our picture.



Layer structure

Demystify the effect

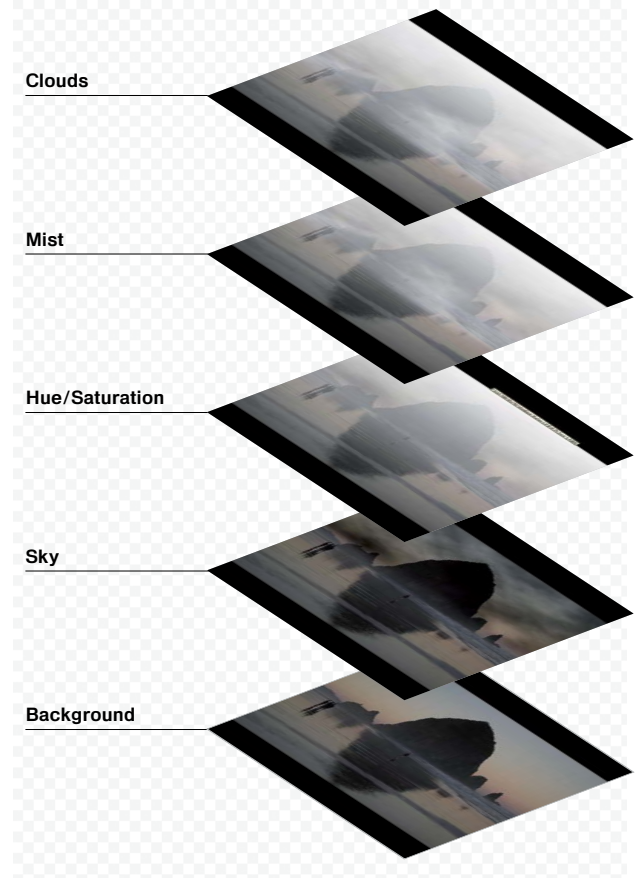
Clouds

Mist

Hue/Saturation

Sky

Background



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Advice

Your expert panel...



GEORGE CAIRNS
George reveals the delights to be found in Photoshop Elements



SIMON RUDD
Simon takes care of your Photoshop queries, with good advice for all

What you'll find in this section



Q+A
Get to the bottom of your image-editing woes in this part



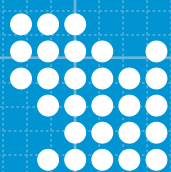
RESOURCES
We guide you to the best websites for tutorials and instruction in using the Photoshop software

Send your questions to...



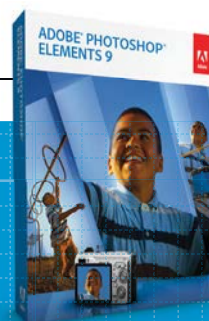
Post your questions to Photoshop Creative Q&A, Imagine Publishing Ltd, Richmond House, 33 Richmond Hill, Bournemouth, Dorset BH2 6EZ.

Alternatively, you can email us at PCR@imagine-publishing.co.uk.



Q+A

Photoshop Elements



Exposure compensation



When I shoot snow it tends to look grey instead of white. Why is this and how can I fix the problem in Photoshop Elements?

Jenny Knight



Most digital cameras tend to use matrix metering when setting an exposure. This means that they take a light reading of the whole scene, then they average the amount of

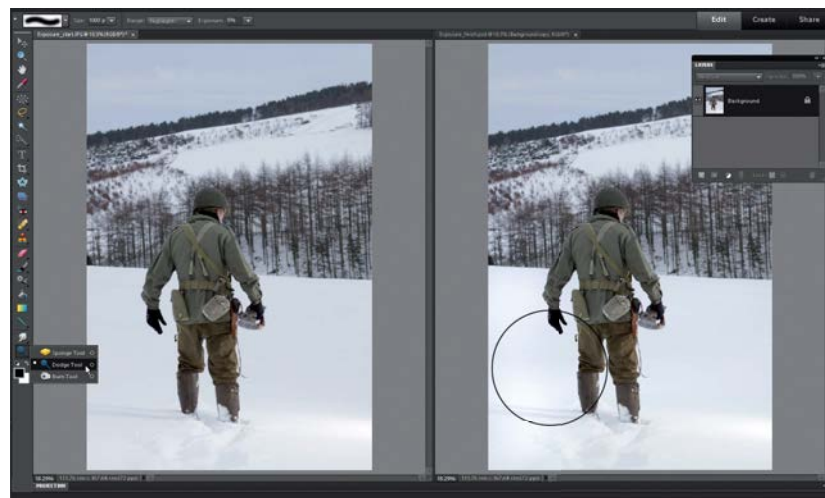
light entering the camera to try and get a balanced exposure. When faced with the glare of light bouncing off a snowy landscape, your camera will tend to under-expose the scene in an attempt to capture highlight detail. This can make snow look grey, rather than white. Many digital SLRs have an exposure compensation command that enables you to open up the aperture electronically to let in more light, and make snow (or any bright white source, like a wedding dress) look white.

Tip



Save with layers

By using an adjustment layer to change a JPEG's colours, you can alter its effect at any time to fine-tune your image. Simply double-click on the adjustment layer's thumbnail to see its editable attributes. However, when you save the file, make sure that you preserve the adjustment layer so that you can tweak it at a later date. If you save the file as a flattened JPEG, the adjustment layer will vanish. Go to File>Save As. Set the Format drop-down menu to one that supports layers, like TIFF or PSD for example.



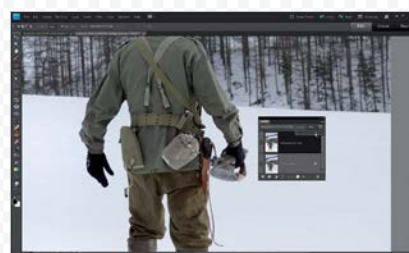
Brighten up under-exposed snow with the Dodge tool in Photoshop



Change the opacity

Use layers to preserve detail

In the first question we used the Dodge tool to brighten up dull snow. If you end up over-exposing the snow you can use Ctrl/Cmd+Z to undo the last few strokes. However, if you close the file then your edit history is lost. By dodging the snow on a duplicate layer you can restore detail to blown-out highlights by reducing the opacity on the edited layer. This reveals some of the original snow on the layer below maintaining a balance between increasing brightness and preserving detail.



Reduce the intensity of an edit but keep photographic detail by adjusting layer opacity



RESOURCES

This site gathers Photoshop tutorials from around the net and places them under one roof; there are lots of creative tips and techniques to discover. You can access hundreds of tutorials on its Facebook page and download free Photoshop actions. www.photoshoproadmap.com

To fake exposure compensation in Photoshop, duplicate the image by dragging its thumbnail onto the Create New Layer icon at the bottom of the Layers palette, then grab the Dodge tool. Choose a large soft brush tip from the Brush Preset picker. In the Options bar set Range to Highlights. This stops the brush brightening the photo's correctly exposed shadows and midtones. Set Exposure to a low value like 5% as this will enable the Dodge tool to lighten the highlights in gentle increments and avoid blowing them out quickly and losing too much detail.

Once you've set up your Dodge tool, simply spray it over the under-exposed grey snow to turn it white. Other tones (like the soldier in our example image) should remain relatively untouched.

Selective colour adjustments

Q What's the quickest and easiest way to turn most of an image black and white but preserve the colours in specific objects?

Tim Morgan

A By preserving the colour of a specific object you can make it stand out from a predominantly black and white scene. However, some objects can be tricky to select. The red berries in our start image are scattered

throughout the shot and are covered in snow, making it a challenge to make a selection around them using traditional techniques like the Magic Wand tool.

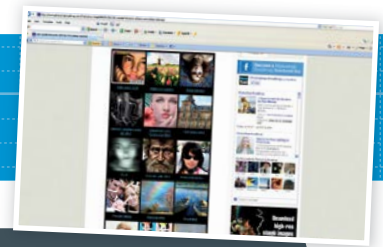
You could try desaturating the shot's blue background while preserving the berries' colour by going to Enhance>Adjust Color>Replace Color. By clicking the Eyedropper tool on the blue sky you should be able to select all of the sky, then reduce its Saturation to -100. This will turn the sky to monochrome while leaving the red berry colour untouched, but it can be a long-winded process, fine-tuning with the Add to Sample eyedropper and adjusting the Fuzziness slider.

For faster colour control, go to the Layers palette and click the Create New Adjustment Layer icon. Add a Hue/Saturation adjustment layer. Click on the Master drop-down menu and choose Blues. Drop Saturation to -100 and desaturate the cyans too in case there are traces of that colour in the sky. Target and desaturate other colours like the yellow tree branch, leaving the red berries untouched.

To enhance the berries' colour even more, set the drop-down menu to Reds and pop the Saturation slider up to around +56. This technique gives you a faster and cleaner way to target and adjust specific colours than you'd get if you were trying to make changes with a standard selection



Target and remove certain colours while enhancing others



FUR EFFECT

Create hair-raising text

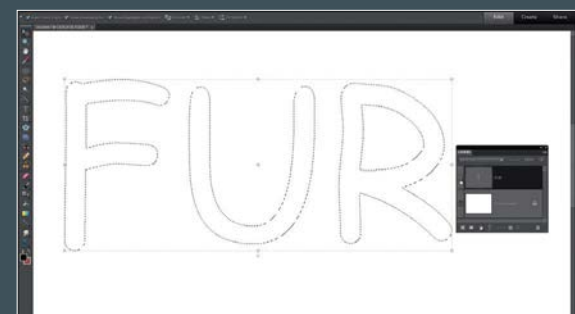


I've been on a mission to make fluffy text for a friend's website – all furry and soft-looking like the funny dice people have in their cars. Any help you could give me would be great.

The Perdactor (from the Photoshop Creative Forum)



Photoshop CS enables you to convert text into paths. You can then take a fur-like brush tip from the Brush Preset picker and stroke it through the text-shaped path. This is a great way to make fur grow from numbers or letters. Photoshop Elements lacks the power of paths, so here's an alternative way to make fur grow out from text for users of this version.



01 Create text Grab the Horizontal Type tool and type out some text. Use a soft curvy font (like Comic Sans MS), as this will suit a fluffy edge. Ctrl/Cmd+click on the text layer's thumbnail to select it then hide the layer using the eye icon.



02 Brush tip Grab the Brush tool. Choose the Dune Grass brush tip. Choose different shades of brown for the Foreground and Background colours and create a new transparent layer. Paint into the text-shaped selection marquee.

03 Spray fur Choose Select>Inverse. Now spray fur sprouting from the edge of the letters. To make the fur grow out in different directions, click the Brush Dynamics icon in the Options bar and change the Angle.



Q+A

Photoshop queries



BABY BEARD

Brush on hair for fun effects



Hi, I want to add some facial hair to my son as a joke, but I'm finding it hard to draw it in. Is there any simple way of doing this in Photoshop?

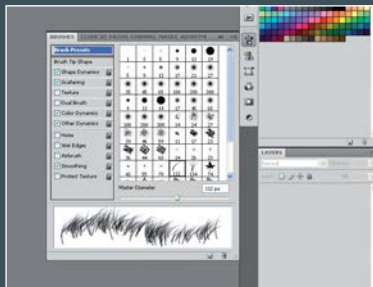
Adam McLean



What a great idea! The best way for us to do this is with the Brush tool. It's much easier to alter an existing brush than draw hair freehand. We'll use the Dune Grass brush, as seen on the previous page.

01 Dune Grass brush

We first select the Brush tool (B) and follow this by pressing F5 to bring up the Brush dialog. In the Brush Presets window (the first tab) locate the Dune Grass brush and click to select it.



02 Brush Tip Shape

In the second tab down you will see the Brush Tip Shape window. Adjust the angle of the brush to -150 degrees. Once you have completed that press F5 on your keyboard again to close the window.



03 Draw in the hair

Finally on a new layer we brush in some hair around the face, starting on the upper lip and working downwards. Finish with a blur to soften the effect. We chose a Gaussian blur at 1 pixel.



Photoshop problems

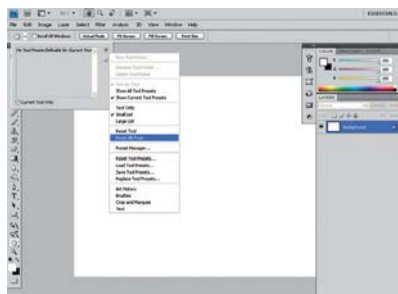


I have a major problem with Photoshop, almost every time I use the program it will crash on me. Could you offer any help?

Dylan Walker



There are a number of reasons why programs crash; it could be anything from hardware to software faults. We'll start with the obvious as there is in fact a glitch with Photoshop and occasionally problems arise with the tools. We can fix this by resetting each tool individually or all at once. As you didn't say



Resetting the tools is one option to help fix problems in Photoshop

what tool you were using when it failed lets concentrate on resetting all the tools.

Resetting all the tools back to their original state can often fix problems and we do this by first selecting a tool from the Toolbar (it doesn't matter which one). On the Options bar you will see an icon that is the same as the tool you chose, and next to it will be a small down arrow. If you click this arrow you get a window with a number of presets available to you. We want to locate the small arrow on the right of this window. Clicking here will open a menu, then scroll down until you find Reset All Tools and click it. There are other solutions to this problem however, so check out the boxout below for more ways of fixing Photoshop.

HDR in CS5



I've been looking at HDR photos and love them. Can I make them in Photoshop?

Katherine Rice



HDR photography, also known as Higher Dynamic Range, is a technique that produces photos



Resetting preferences

Fixing problems before Photoshop loads

Photoshop is a fantastic program that can be used for many different creative projects, but as with most things it occasionally goes wrong. This can be for lots of different reasons and there are lots of solutions (such as the question above). One common cause of headaches is that the Photoshop preferences have become messed up. Luckily for us there is a simple way of resetting these. Simply hold Shift+Ctrl/Cmd+Alt while Photoshop loads up.

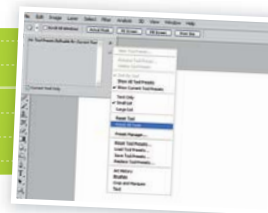


Resetting Photoshop's preferences will cure some of those nagging problems in the program

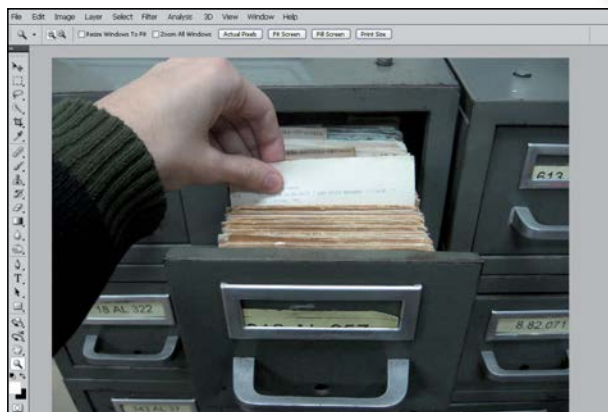


RESOURCES: TOOLS

Wordpress is a free website creator that can be used to make sites and blogs. It can be run from your own web server or you download it, or you can register for a free account. Perfect for showcasing your Photoshop creations.
<http://wordpress.org/>



Use Photoshop's Merge to HDR dialog to produce stunning HDR photos



Photoshop has many available file formats to make life easier

that look more like their real environment while at the same time giving the scene a dramatic feel. We can make HDR images by taking multiple photos of the same scene with different exposure values then merging them altogether in one picture. First, it is essential that you have a camera that has Bracketing available. This will take a series of photos using a different exposure for each one, ranging from dark to light. You must have a tripod or a flat surface to balance your camera on so that it does not move. After we have our series of photos (we need between three and seven for the HDR effect) we can use Photoshop's Merge to HDR Pro in CS5 (or Merge to HDR in CS4) dialog by going to File>Automate>Merge to HDR Pro. Within

this dialog box we can edit the merged photo and create a stunning HDR picture. A full tutorial on how to use Merge to HDR Pro can be found at Tip Squirrel: <http://tinyurl.com/merge2hdr>.

File format

Q When I save my pictures in Photoshop I normally use the PSD format, but I noticed there are lots of others available. Which is the best to use?

Charles McGrath

A It all depends on what you want the file for. For example, a PSD file is basically a Photoshop document

and can be used with other versions of Photoshop (as long as the file is compatible with the version you want to open it in). This format will keep the layers intact and is also a file type that is known as lossless – in other words no data is compressed or lost. Another format is a TIFF (Tagged Image File Format). These are normally very large but can be used similarly to a PSD where layers are supported, though they are not recommended for use on the internet. Other formats that you may be familiar with are JPEG (Joint Photographic Experts Group), PNG (Portable Network Graphics) and GIF (Graphics Interchange Format). These are usually smaller, lossy files, but can be useful, for example with images for websites.

Tip



Color Range tool

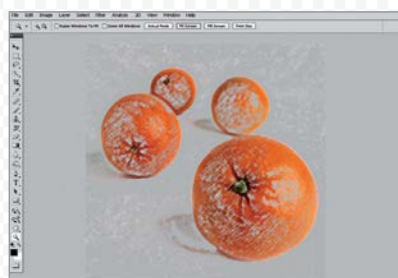
There are many different ways of selecting things using Photoshop. The Quick Selection tool is extremely good at picking up objects, and if you want precision you can always rely on the Pen tool. But if you want to select just by using colour, try out the Color Range tool. This feature uses the Eyedropper tool to choose the colour you want to select, and by holding down Shift you can select multiple colours at the same time. The Color Range tool is found under the Select menu.



Colored Pencil

Evoke real media easily

The Artistic filters can be used to produce real media effects on photos. The Colored Pencil filter can be found by going to Filter>Artistic Filters>Colored Pencil. When used, it creates a copy of the layer it is on and fills it with a rough, crosshatched appearance. Change the colour of the paper it appears on by changing the Background colour. The filter also allows you to edit the pencil width, stroke pressure and paper brightness.



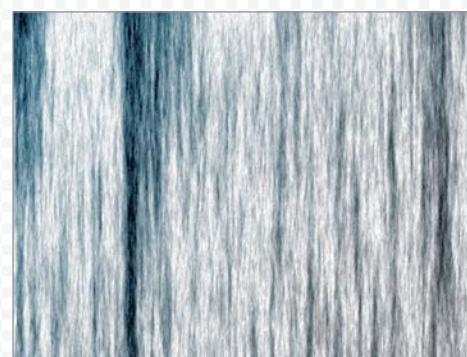
Real media effects can be achieved by using Photoshop's Artistic filters



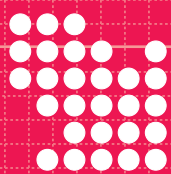
Fibers filter

Create fabric with this Render filter

The Render filters are designed to produce realistic effects and this particular filter creates a texture that is similar to a woven fibre. By setting the colours in the Foreground and Background swatches, you can influence the appearance of the effect. You can also adjust the variance and strength. The Variance slider controls the length of the fibres – a low setting makes long streaks and high creates shorter ones – while the Strength slider controls how each fibre looks.



The Fibers filter easily creates a custom woven effect



A-Z

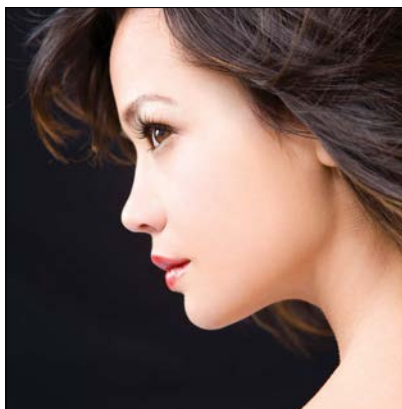
C is for... Cloning, Curves, custom shapes and coping with compositional complications

of Photoshop

Clone Stamp tool

The Clone Stamp tool is a true lifesaver for removing unwanted parts of images.

It could be a case of removing a mark from a scan, doing some digital landscaping to make a scene look more appealing or even



The Clone Stamp tool can retouch a person's skin to perfection by removing all marks and spots

ridding someone's face of an unsightly blemish. Found next to the Pattern Stamp tool, the Clone Stamp is a brush in essence. It can change in size and hardness, use different blend modes, and can also change in opacity and flow. Among other options that go with the tool, such as ignoring adjustment layers, you can use the Alt/Option key to copy and paste one part of your image over another.

It's most effective when used with a low hardness value – such as 0%-20% – to make sure that the transitions between cloned and un-cloned parts are invisible. Setting the tool's size to that of the area you plan to remove keeps everything looking tidy. When you hold down Alt/Option, small crosshairs will appear to help you pinpoint the exact centre of the area you wish to copy. The crosshairs are particularly useful if you're cloning along a line, allowing you to keep it straight and tidy.

Content-Aware Scale

Possibly the cleverest feature in Photoshop, the Content-Aware Scale option is found under the Edit menu.

Basically a way of resizing an image without affecting the main subject, Content-Aware Scale comes with a couple of options such as Protecting Skin Tones, which minimise distortion. Simply drag one corner of the area and watch how Photoshop magically alters everything but the subject.



Only enlarge the area around the subjects with Content-Aware Scale

Tip



Cropping

The Crop tool is a fast way to chop off any superfluous parts of your composition. You can set the dimensions of the area using the Width and Height boxes in the Options bar, and you can set an opacity for the area outside the cropped frame. The tool can also straighten your image and even alter perspective.

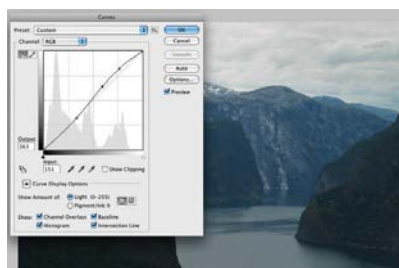


IMPROVING COLOUR AND CONTRAST

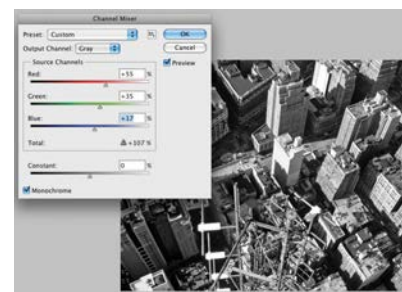
Three popular image adjustments with the letter C in mind



01 Color Balance The Color Balance adjustment can be put to good use in a number of ways. Firstly, if you have an image that suffers from discolouration, use the adjustment's three sliders to shift the hues to look normal. Or, for a more creative output, use the Color Balance adjustment to boost tones.



02 Curves Take control of the light in your images with the Curves adjustment, allowing you to manipulate the entire dynamics using a histogram and a few dots. Best used in small amounts, the slightest change to the Curve's histogram will boost highlights, midtones and shadows. A good place to start is with the list presets, which include Medium Contrast, Negative, Lighter, and Darker.



03 Channel Mixer The Channel Mixer is useful to convert a colour image to black and white. Open up the menu from Image>Adjustments>Channel Mixer and hit the Monochrome box at the bottom. You're then able to adapt the strength of the red, green and blue channels to create different tones which will ultimately change the mood of your black and white effect.



RESOURCES: FREE CUSTOM SHAPES

Shape Mania is crazy about the art of custom shapes, providing you with an excellent variety and free-to-download objects to apply in your compositions. Designs include ornaments, tree outlines, decorations and many more.
www.shape-mania.com



Custom Shape tool

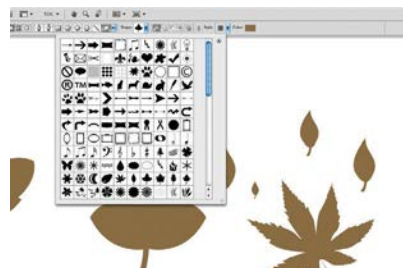
Many hidden secrets lie within the Custom Shape tool and it takes a bit of exploring to get to know what it's capable of doing. It can be used for illustrations and scrapbooks, poster projects, logos and symbols in web design or for just plain old decoration. Custom shapes are vector-based objects and so they can be resized without losing essential definition. This is a significant advantage in the laying-out stages of a design as they can be printed to enormous sizes. Photoshop has many preset custom shapes to try out including the categories Arrows, Frames, Banners, Nature, Talk Bubbles, Tiles and Music.

Select a custom shape from the Options bar and, holding Shift, draw onto your canvas. The Shape goes onto its own layer with a vector mask. A path is visible around the edges and you can use the Direct Selection tool (A) to edit this path and change the structure of the shape. When you're happy with what you've made, the layer can be Rasterized by Ctrl/right-clicking on it. This makes it a normal editing layer, but before Rasterizing, the vector shape can be recoloured and reshaped.

Creating your own custom shapes is a fairly easy process. Start by making a selection around an object that you want

to make into a shape. Ctrl/right-click inside the selected area and pick Make Work Path from the options. This turns the selection into a solid outline that's resolution independent. Next, go to Edit>Define Custom Shape, and give it name. The shape is now saved to use time and time again.

Custom shapes can be treated to layer styles or a blend mode for some interesting effects, so you can get creative.



The preset custom shapes can be used as a small, decorative addition or for backgrounds



Custom shapes can be made from any image using a selection turned into a working path

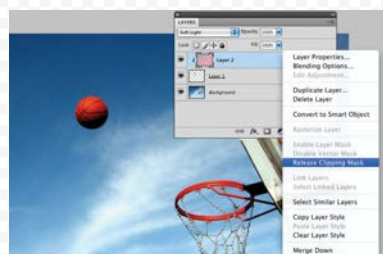
“Custom shapes are vector-based, so they can be resized without losing definition”



Clipping masks

How to apply an invisible mask

A clipping mask links two layers together in the Layers palette. Whenever you edit the top one afterwards, it will only affect the attached layer beneath. These can be useful for applying textures, for example. You can apply a clipping mask to two layers by Alt/Option-clicking on the line between the layers in the palette or Ctrl/right-clicking on the top layer and selecting Create Clipping Mask from the list of options. Clipping masks aren't permanent and can be removed at any point. In short, they are layer masks without the physical mask.



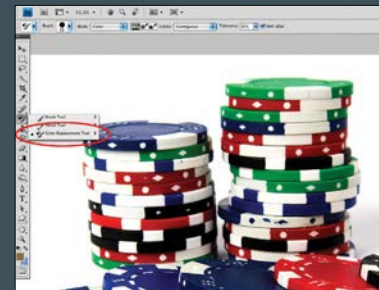
A clipping mask links two layers to separate them from the rest of the composition



COLOR REPLACEMENT

Swap colour using this tool

Don't like the colour of something? There's no reason to fret, as it's the job of the Color Replacement tool to exchange one colour for another. Follow these four steps to uncover the mysteries of this extremely useful feature.



01 Set Tolerance

The tool is found within the Brush and Pencil tools. In the Options bar you can set the Tolerance level to decide how much colour is picked up and swapped.



02 Set the Limits

Contiguous replaces touching pixels of the same colour, Discontiguous replaces all of that colour and Find Edges preserves pixel sharpness.



03 New colour

Choose your replacement colour as the Foreground colour swatch in the Tools bar. You can pick out a colour from an object in the image to use or a new one.



04 The switch

Paint over a subject and watch how it's replaced with your chosen colour. The brush picks and masks out only the colours that are touched by the cursor crosshairs.

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PLUG-INS

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Perfect Photo Suite 5.5

info

COMPANY

onOne Software

WEB

www.ononesoftware.com

PRICE

£379.00

OPERATING SYSTEM

Mac OS X 10.5 or 10.6 and Windows XP, Windows Vista or Windows 7

SPECS

1.8 GHz or faster processor, 2GB RAM, 3GB disk space



When working with digital images, Photoshop users are confronted with various problems – colour correction, replacing backgrounds, resizing and creating a professional look using photographic effects. These are all tackled in onOne Software's latest version of Perfect Photo Suite. Containing six plug-ins, the suite is intuitive in its layout and offers users a great level of control. One of the suite's strengths is its ease of use, and advice is given when using any of the plug-ins. For example, when one is launched, a window opens with step-by-step guidance on how to get the best results.

A new version of Perfect Resize is included in the suite, which uses the same algorithms as image enlargement plug-in Genuine Fractals and can even work with layered files. Enlargements are straightforward to carry out by entering new pixel dimensions or changing the document size or resolution. Crop guides

also help with composition and texture, sharpening, smoothness and film grain can be controlled using the sliders.

If a challenging selection needs to be made, removing and replacing backgrounds can be tricky. However, backgrounds can be masked in a few clicks using MaskPro. It includes two eyedroppers to select colours that you want to keep or remove and clicking on the shades makes them appear in a palette to keep or drop. The final step is painting out areas to be masked using the magic brush. It really is masking with minimal effort required.

Professional effects can be applied and fine-tuned with the PhotoTools plug-in, which presents a before and after version of the photograph. Browsing through the library of effects, which have been created by professional photographers and Photoshop users, presents many ways to give images the wow factor. The effects are split into library categories such as Black and White and Vintage, and their



Within its simple to understand workspace, Perfect Photo Suite allows you to take control and fine-tune effects

strength is adjusted using the Fade slider. From soft portrait effects to edgy black and white presets, a variety of artistic looks can be created using this plug-in. However, it would be handy to have thumbnail images showing examples of what the preset effects look like, but this is lacking.

To add another level of creativity, head over to PhotoFrame to apply edge and border effects. Once you have browsed through the frames in the Library, their size and position is adjusted within the

Tip



Thanks to a new area of Perfect Resize called the Loupe window, you can keep a full-sized view of the image while displaying a magnified area. This makes it easier to see the effects on an enlarged version of a photograph without zooming in on the preview window. Click on different areas of the larger window for a different view.



PLUG-INS FOR ALL OCCASIONS

Add a frame, blur a background or produce a stylish black-and-white effect



01 Perfect Resize This powerful plug-in includes a Document Size panel to carry out the size adjustments within. It also includes new categories within the preset size window for Panoramic sizes and No Crop sizes. A clean look can be created in the enlarged image by making use of the Smoothness control, which reduces any noise that may creep in during the process.



02 Professional photographic effects Producing professional-looking photographic effects is easy even for those new to image editing. This image was given a softer look with one of the presets in PhotoTools. Professionals have created all of the presets so you know you are going to get high quality results. The plug-in even enables multiple effects to be applied at once.



03 Standalone versatility The versatility of the suite is also demonstrated in the different ways you can work with each of its plug-ins. Perfect Resize, FocalPoint, PhotoTune and PhotoFrame can all be accessed as plug-ins or as standalone applications from the Start menu of a Windows computer or by dragging an image onto the corresponding icon when using a Mac.



MASK OUT BACKGROUNDS LIKE A PRO

Using the eyedroppers and magic brush, you are a few steps away from the perfect mask

You can easily replace unwanted backgrounds using MaskPro. For example, in our photograph we wanted to replace the dark moody sky with a bright blue clear sky. Before any masking can be carried out, the image needs to be layered. Therefore, if you are working with the Background layer double-click to convert it to a normal layer. For the best results, it is advisable for the subject of the image to stand out from the background. The best selections are also made if you zoom in first so colours that want to be kept or removed can be easily selected using the two eyedroppers. With the help of the magic brush, the background is painted away in a few sweeps of the mouse.



MaskPro is perfect for replacing a cloudy day with beautiful, bright blue skies instead

plug-in. An impressive range of styles is included such as grungy borders, elegant swirl designs and those made completely from text. However, it is not very clear that double-clicking on a border takes you to the edit window, slowing the process.

There is just so much crammed into Perfect Photo Suite that you are spoilt for choice when it comes to the adjustments and effects you can apply. It even solves the problem of adding a bokeh effect and blur to the background. FocalPoint allows you to make an image's subject the point of focus,

which is perfect for those using a camera that does not enable depth of field to be changed. Background blur is created by dragging FocusBugs on areas that are to be kept in focus and then adjusting their shape. It takes a bit of time to get used to which handles control the size of the blur and which control the vignette effect, though.

Image correction is also a hassle-free task with PhotoTune, which makes it possible to control brightness, contrast, colour and sharpness. The plug-in presents two versions of the image and it is up to the user

Before



A combination of three of the plug-ins makes it possible to colour-correct a photograph and then apply a frame and soft portrait effect



After

to click on the one they think looks best. By working through the adjustments in stages, the plug-in makes it easy to understand the effect any changes made have on the photograph. The Go Pro window also permits more detailed changes to be made and is yet another example of the suite catering for both novice image editors and those that want more control over their adjustments.

PROS

- Intuitive and well arranged workspace
- Step-by-step guidance
- High level of control

CONS

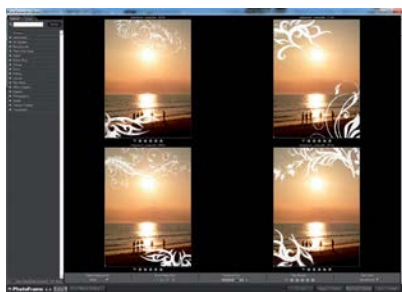
- Some confusion editing frames
- Controlling FocusBug handles can be tricky
- Lacks PhotoTools preset thumbnail examples

VERDICT

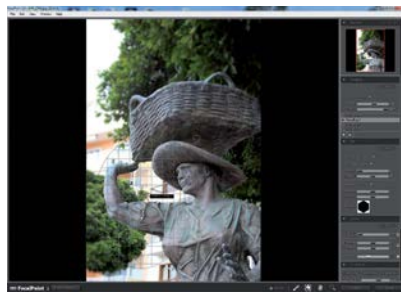
8.0

Packed with useful and creative features, the suite is well suited to photo-editing beginners and those wanting more control over effects applied

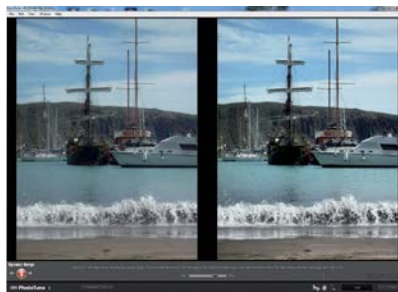
"ONE OF PERFECT PHOTO SUITE'S STRENGTHS IS ITS EASE OF USE AND ADVICE IS GIVEN WHEN USING ANY OF THE PLUG-INS"



04 Add edge effects The latest version of Perfect Photo Suite comes complete with new layouts and backgrounds within the PhotoFrame. Design elements included range from textures and borders to film edges and grungy effects. Whether you are working on single images or compiling an album of photographs, the plug-in helps add a creative touch to them.



05 Point of focus FocalPoint comes in handy when working with a camera that is not capable of capturing depth of field. It can create instant bokeh effects and increase background blur to bring out the main subject of a photograph. After choosing Round or Planar from the FocusBug Shape drop-down menu, the size of the area that is in focus is changed by dragging the handles.



06 Make sure your image is in tune Optimising brightness, contrast, colour and sharpness are the main strengths of PhotoTune. It's very user-friendly and the Go Pro option allows more adjustments to be made to fine-tune the effect. PhotoTune even caters for different types of image by allowing you to indicate whether it's a landscape or includes skin tones in the picture.



HARDWARE

NEC SpectraView 231

A class above the rest – but is this just an expensive toy?

info

COMPANY

NEC

WEB

www.nec-display-solutions.co.uk

PRICE

£755 (excl. VAT)

SPECS

Size: 23 inches

Resolution: Full HD (1,920 x 1,080)

Aspect ratio: 16:9

Brightness: 270cd/m²

Contrast ratio: 1,000:1

PROS

Enjoy full HD quality

Affordable for a SpectraView model

Compact dimensions

Offsets the effects of time

CONS

Heavy at 10.2kg

VERDICT

9.0

We don't believe in perfection, but this comes close

23-inch widescreen The display is a compact widescreen measuring in at 23 inches from corner to corner. Even at its small size, however, the monitor has a big presence in terms of quality.

3D LUT The display has a 3D LUT (Look Up Table) for making the most of available colour, which makes the process of creating your own profiles easier.



his high-specification SpectraView 231 LCD display comes at a wallet-denting price. But, if you're after a larger

screen size in NEC's SpectraView series, then the jump in price is nearly double, making this a bargain in comparison. In fact, NEC takes the trouble of testing each of the SpectraView models one by one in the factory. Until it has made the grade and is signed off, it's not allowed to go anywhere, so you're assured of quality.

The 16:9 widescreen SV231 has on-board adjustments including Brightness, Contrast, Eco Mode, Black adjustment, Fine and Sharpness values. These help you tweak the display to the way you want it to look, whether that's for increased strength of colours or to be as natural-looking as possible. As you would hope from a display of this price, the colours are full of life, complemented by crisp graphics.

This 23-inch display cements itself firmly on your desk as an immovable object, weighing in at an incredible 10.2kg; a sign that its innards are packed with technology. Its jet black, matte frame and stand give the display a modest and professional appearance. It has a wide viewing angle of 178 horizontal and vertical for turning the screen and showing others what you're working on, still keeping colour accuracy. As

well as being able to spin the display, you can rotate it 90 degrees into portrait mode and to a height of up to 15cm.

The 1,920 x 1,080 resolution of the SV231 is what you'd expect from a monitor of its price. Its high resolution is more than enough to cater for working with 2D and 3D art in Photoshop, whether that's with text or images. However, only 75% of the Adobe RGB colour space is covered, which isn't a patch on the pricier models that use a wider, 98% gamut, and could be a disadvantage.

If you're looking to upgrade your display that has either discoloured over time or just doesn't do your Photoshop artwork justice any more, then looking to the SpectraView range is a good way forward, though another worthwhile consideration is the PA range of displays from NEC at a more affordable price.

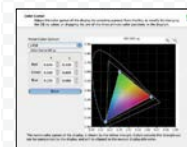
The SV231 is an attractive addition to the SpectraView range from NEC, stirring up competition among rivals such as EIZO and Dell. If its price doesn't put you off, then this model is an outstanding contender for colour-critical artists, with lots of room to adjust colour profiles.

Crisp colour The display produces such colour-accurate results that it looks to please designers, photographers and painters who would take pride in colour gamut control.

PIP mode The SV231 has a Picture-in-Picture mode that allows you to divide the screen in sections for working with multiple programs and ensuring a more efficient workflow.



TAKE A CLOSER LOOK



NEC MultiProfiler

This dedicated display profiler saves and generates ICC profiles and can be downloaded from the company's website.



Aging Correction

NEC has included Backlight Aging Correction to address the deterioration of colours and balance over time.



Get connected USB connections, DVI and D-Sub ports allow old and new systems to be hooked up to the SV231 as well as an HD capable Display Port.



Using desk space The 23-inch display is adaptable and easily moveable with a height adjustment of up to 15cm, allowing for a portrait mode.

SOFTWARE

Edit images wherever you are

Photoshop Express 1.5 app

info

COMPANY

Adobe

WEB

www.adobe.com

PRICE

Free

SPECS

iPhone, iPod touch or iPad with iOS 4.2 or later



Adobe's Photoshop Express is aimed at giving users the ability to access and edit photos wherever they are.

To do this, you can set up an account at **Photoshop.com** and use that to store, edit and share your images. The Photoshop Express app (also available for Android users) enables anyone to do this from their mobile device and is a quick and easy way to improve and share photos.

After installation, you can grab photos either from your online account or from your Photos area. Chances are you will want

across the screen' action. You swish one way to enhance the effect and the other way to lessen it; although with the Tint option, you swish to pick the colours you want to use.

In addition to these meat and potatoes edits, there is also a sprinkling of more creative effects. You have a choice of Sketch, Soft Focus and Sharpen filters, in addition to preset looks such as Vibrant, Pop, Warm Vintage and White Glow. The effects can be applied with just a click and the ever-present Undo option means you can easily make a hasty retreat from an edit if it isn't quite what you originally planned.

"PHOTOSHOP EXPRESS MAKES IT EASY TO TWEAK PHOTOS ON THE GO AND SHARE WITH OTHERS"

to edit the image in some way, and there are a decent amount of options available. You can perform a simple crop, straighten, rotate and flip. This works in the same way as Photoshop, so it's nice and familiar. You can also perform other essential image edits such as fixing exposure, editing saturation, boosting contrast, converting to black and white or applying a tint. All of these are performed by a simple 'slide

Applying the edits is pleasingly quick, with everything taking place in a nice big interface so you can see what is happening. Once you are happy with your edits, you can choose to upload them, either to your **Photoshop.com** account or to your Facebook page.

Photoshop Express makes it easy to tweak your photos on the go, or to quickly share images with others. It is easy to use and the fact that it's free makes things even better!



TAKE A CLOSER LOOK



Access images You can import images from your Photoshop.com account or from the gallery on your mobile device. Simply navigate to them.



One-click effects The Effects option gives you the chance to apply a host of pre-made looks. You can use the other editing tools to adapt these.



Borders For that final flourish, make use of the Borders option. As soon as you click on one it will be applied to your image ready to be accepted or cancelled.



Share Once the editing is over, use the Share facility to upload your image to your Photoshop.com account or directly to Facebook.

PROS

- Tweak images wherever you may be
- Simple methods of editing
- Free to download

CONS

- Could do with a few more extra effects

VERDICT

8.0

Edit images easily on the move, but don't expect a complete set of Photoshop tools

Photo pick

Use this top area to select a new photo or upload the one that is currently being edited.

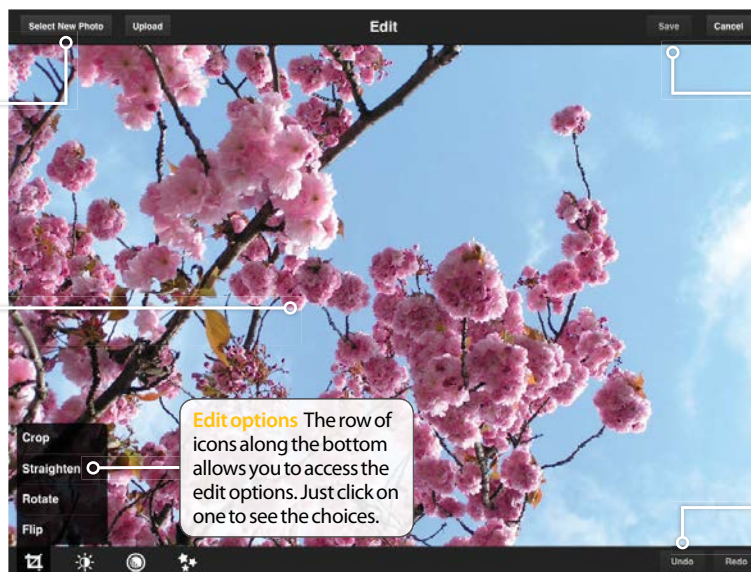
See what happens

The edits take place within the main interface, meaning that you can see exactly what is going on.

Edit options The row of icons along the bottom allows you to access the edit options. Just click on one to see the choices.

Save or abort When you are happy with your edit, hit Save to commit. If things have gone badly, hit Cancel to make it all go away!

Change your mind It doesn't matter if you change your mind – you can undo or even redo at any time using these two buttons.



Requirements: Apple iPhone 3G, iPod Touch or iPad >> iPhone 3.1.2 or higher >> an Internet connection



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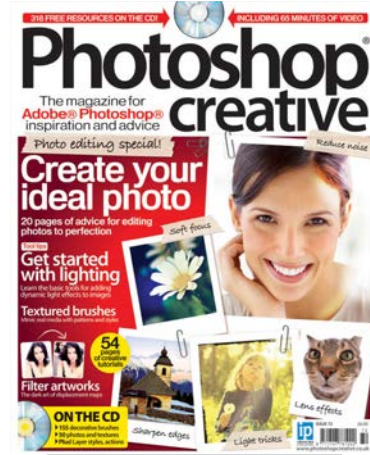
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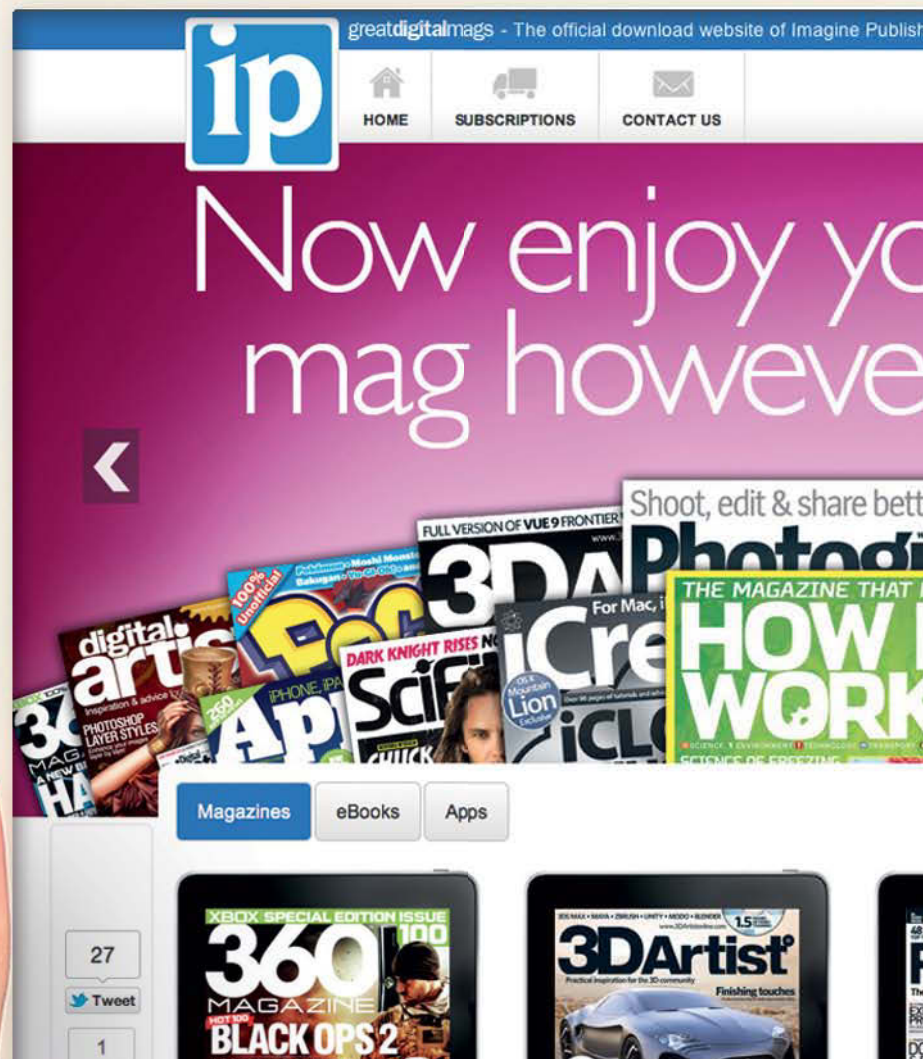
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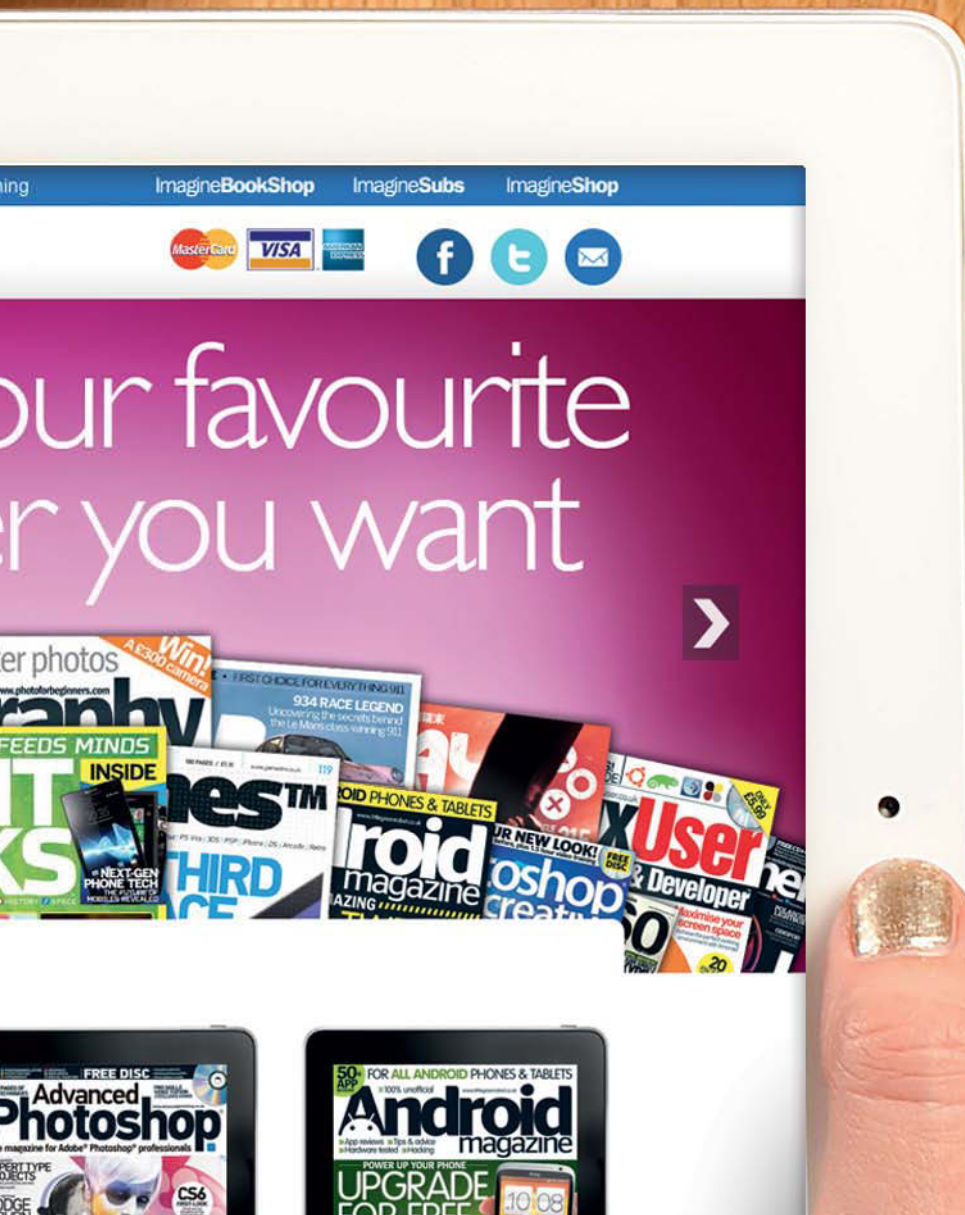
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